

**by EDMOND  
HAMILTON**

VOLUME 1  
NUMBER 3

# FANTASTIC ADVENTURES

SEPTEMBER  
1939

SEE  
BACK  
COVER

## Complete Stories

by

**TREMAINE**

# KUMMER

## BINDER

## BOND

# CITY UNDER THE SEA

by **NAT SCHACHNER**

**SEPTEMBER**  
**20c**

**Horror Out of Carthage**

by **EDMOND  
HAMILTON**

# **Fantastic**

## **ADVENTURES**

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28x5.50-19	3.35 1.40
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32x4	2.95 1.20	30x6	3.65 1.05
33x4	2.95 1.25	33x5	3.75 1.75
34x4	3.25 1.35	35x5	3.95 1.75
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# The Editor's Notebook

## A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

WITH this issue of the magazine you have so enthusiastically welcomed, we bring a policy dictated and approved by our readers as the perfect one for their favorite magazine. When we presented FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, we were playing a hunch. And we played it right. You do want a magazine of fantasy with an adventure tang. Thanks for your praise and your help, by means of the flood of letters commenting on everything from stories to cartoons.

AMONG the fine stories in this issue you will find two long ones by favorite adventure-fantasy writers. Edmond Hamilton brings us a smashing tale of time-travel, mental science, and sheer fantasy with suspense dripping from every word. It'll delight you. In no other magazine could you find a story like this. The same can be said for F. Orlin Tremaine's fine adventure in a strange country almost unknown to man. It's a grand mystery yarn too.

WE won't say much about the other great stories, other than to point out Nelson S. Bond's fine short. This one still has your editor chuckling, and he's read it a dozen times in the process of preparing it for FANTASTIC's pages. As for Nat Schachner, Eando Binder, and Frederick Arnold Kummer, Jr., who need say more!

IN answer to insistent demand, we have presented our feature departments, including the reader's page, in smaller type, so as to give you more wordage. We sincerely appreciate your approval of our departments, and we'll keep up their high standard.

WE might point out a feature in our pages which you might find handy to keep as a reference. The Romance of the Elements, which began in our July issue, will feature each of the elements in alphabetical order, all the way through the whole 92. For a handy, interesting history of the elements so important to the makeup of everything in the universe, and the condensed facts about them, this series will be indispensable.

NUTRITIONISTS have recently determined exactly how much a man must eat to stay alive. Most of us, reading the suggested diet, will ask: *But will he want to live?*

Nevertheless it is guaranteed to maintain the life of an adult for an indefinite period and prevent such deficiency diseases as scurvy, pellagra, anaemia and rickets. Want to try it? Pull up a chair.

You begin with one-twelfth of an ounce of cod-liver oil, two ounces of dried skim-milk, a slice of lemon. These dishes respectively contain generous portions of vitamins A, B, and C.

Still hungry? Then we'll give you some very filling carbohydrates—18 ounces of whole wheat bread. This is the main course. Oh, yes. You get a side order of peanuts. Fattening, you know. Have you room for dessert? Try a pinch of salt. It maintains the

water balance in the body tissues.

Personally, though, we think you're overeating. It's too much for us. Just bring us some chicken soup, roast beef, mashed potatoes, apple pie, cheese and coffee. We're not hungry today.

THE growing popularity of nudism has finally led science to express its opinion of the effect of the practice on health. Starting, as an organized movement, in Germany in the early '20's, nudism had spread even to the United States by 1934. Despite popular ridicule, in that year this country sheltered 300,000 serious nudists!

The number can not even be guessed today, when there is a considerable body of public opinion upholding the social value of nudism. But scientists, however they may dispute on that score, agree as to the physical value of prolonged exposure to sunlight. Contrary to nudists' beliefs, they find it definitely harmful!

Sunburn is a form of skin disease. It stretches and damages the capillaries, increases fibrous tissue. In time the skin grows scaly and wrinkled. And become predisposed to cancer.

However the vogue spreads, we will never find scientists in the nude!

WE suggest that you keep your eye peeled for the October issue of our sister magazine, AMAZING STORIES, on the stands August 10. This issue will contain one of the most amazing stories ever presented in any science fiction or fantasy magazine. It is a sensation, and AMAZING STORIES dares to present it to the public in its original unedited form to allow them to make their own decision. This form of presentation has not been done in any science fiction magazine to date. We promise you, you'll be amazed and delighted and staggered by its effectiveness, the sheer scope of its daring plot. No reader of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES should miss this sensational scoop story.

DUE to the very favorable comment by our readers on the art work of Mr. Julian S. Krupa, we have added this excellent artist to our art department and he will now work directly with your editors for FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and also for

AMAZING STORIES. However, this does not mean that we will discontinue the policy of presenting the variety of best science fiction and fantasy artists to you in our pages as we have been in the past. In this issue, you will note illustrations by four different artists.

OUR cover this month is a result of numerous requests on the part of our enthusiastic art lovers for the work of H. W. MacCauley on the front cover. We have complied with these requests, and we believe Mr. MacCauley has turned out a cover that will delight you. His figure work is especially fine, and his concept of fantasy and science is original and smooth in technique.

AND with that your editor closes up his notebook for another issue. We'll be back next time with more jottings.



"You gotta give those Hindus credit. They had it doped out from the start."

# Fantastic

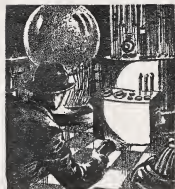
## ADVENTURES

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Watch for Stenton A. Coblentz' great story of "The Purple Conspirators," written only as this master of fantasy and satire can write it. In our next issue.



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# Horror out

# of Carthage

Across 2000 years went Blaine and Edith  
to find themselves doomed by history to  
die in the conquest of ancient Carthage

By  
**EDMOND  
HAMILTON**

## CHAPTER I

From the Buried Past

**K**ENNETH BLAINE felt the girl beside him shiver as she looked out at the raw, newly-excavated trenches and pits that lay baking in the sullen African sunset.

"Ken, I wish dad had never heard of Carthage," said Edith Kerr suddenly. "This place is getting on my nerves."

The tall young archaeologist turned and looked down at the girl with surprise on his serious, clean-cut face.

"Why, Edith, what's the matter?"

"The Romans cursed Carthage when they destroyed it, didn't they?" said the girl. "Well, I feel that we're digging up that curse again. That something sinister is happening here—to me."

Edith's smooth, taffy-yellow bobbed hair came only to Blaine's shoulder. In her short white linen dress, with her sun-tanned bare arms and legs, she looked like a carefree, pretty schoolgirl. But her ordinarily fun-loving blue eyes were clouded with deep emotion now as she stared down at the busy scene below.

She and the young archaeologist stood on the slope



Blaine's hands closed around her throat. She struggled wildly to escape



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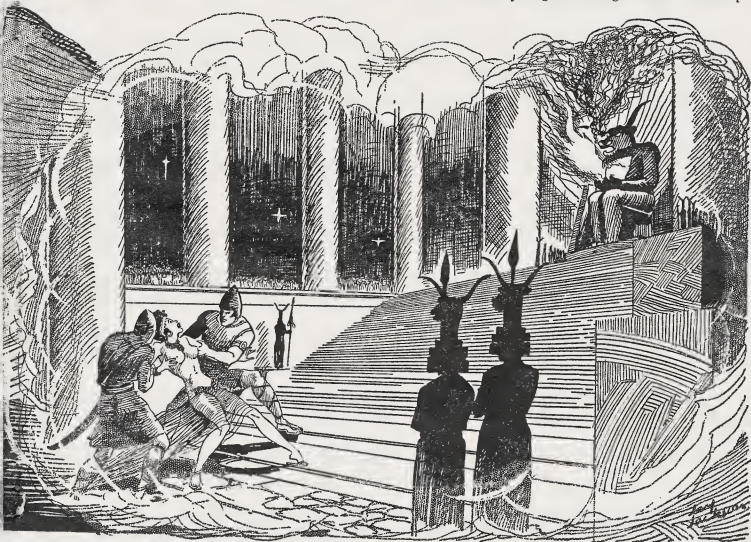
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of a low, time-rounded green hill. Behind them lay the flat-roofed, gleaming white villa that served as headquarters for the Western University Carthage Expedition, which had come half around the world from America to dig for the most mysterious of ancient cities.

In front of Blaine and the girl, green fields sloped down to the labyrinth of raw new excavations in which a multitude of white-robed Arab laborers were languidly picking and spade. Beyond lay the blue sheet of the Gulf of Tunis, its farther shore guarded by dim violet mountains.

This scene held a fascination for Blaine. On this very spot, centuries before the birth of Christ, had reared the massive walls and towers and temples of Carthage, cruel, mistress of the seas. Here a fantastic, barbaric civilization had reached its climax, and had been finally destroyed with utter completeness by conquering Rome.

But now there was anxiety in Kenneth Blaine's serious dark eyes as he looked down at the girl.

"Something sinister happening to you?" he repeated worriedly. "What do you mean?"

Edith tried to speak lightly, but he saw the faint dread that shadowed her blue eyes as she looked up at him.

"Ken, I don't know just what is happening to me. But for the last two nights I've felt it—a queer and rather horrible dream. A dream in which someone or something keeps trying to push me out of my body."

She laughed uncomfortably. "I know it sounds crazy. But it's pretty terrifying. I can feel that other person, that other mind, exerting a tremendous mental push on my own mind to make me leave my body. Each time, I seemed actually on the point of being forced out of my body—and then I'd wake up and realize it was just a nightmare."

Her small tanned hand tightened on the sleeve of his white suit, and her red lips quivered a little.

"It's a bad sensation, Ken. Someone trying to force you out of your body! Even though it's only a dream—I don't like it."

He patted her hand. "I wouldn't worry about a bad dream, Edith," he reassured her. "It's just the psychological influence of this place. Here we are, digging up a place where there was once more cruelty and torture and horrible death than anywhere else on earth. It's natural you're affected by this atmosphere."

"Still, I don't like such dreams," Edith murmured. "I wish we could leave here—I almost wish dad would give up these excavations—"

"And a fine wish that is for an archaeologist's daughter!" broke in a booming, outraged voice. "What's the matter with you? Getting homesick?"

**K**ENNETH BLAINE turned. Doctor John Kerr had come up the slope to them, a massive, stocky figure, his white pith helmet in his hand, his stiff shock

of iron-gray hair bare as he mopped his genial red face with a handkerchief.

Down at the foot of the slope, the thin figure of old Abel McPherson was to be seen dismissing the dark-faced Arab laborers, his rasping voice floating up to them.

"Here we are trying to uncover old Carthage," Doctor Kerr was growling at his daughter, "and you hope we'll fail, so you can go back home!"

Blaine asked the senior archaeologist, "There's no sign yet of the Temple of Moloch?"

"No, not a trace," Kerr answered gloomily. "Darn the Romans, anyway! They surely did a complete job of destroying Carthage when they took it. Killed the people, and burned the buildings, and then plowed up the ground where they had stood. No wonder we've spent two months here without finding that temple."

He turned and bellowed down the slope to Abel McPherson, who was climbing toward them. "Come on, Mac—a shower and a good dinner will make us feel better about it."

"I'm coming," the dour-faced old Scotsman answered in his rasping burr. "I'm not as young as ye are, remember."

As Blaine and Edith followed the two senior archaeologists back through the sunset to the villa, the girl spoke.

"Don't tell dad anything about my dreams, Ken. He's getting discouraged enough without having me to worry about."

Blaine nodded thoughtfully. "He was so sure that we could find the Temple of Moloch. And it doesn't look as though we can. Yet, Edith, if these queer nightmares are upsetting you—"

"They aren't," the girl said quickly. "I just had a little fit of nerves, or I wouldn't have mentioned them. And you're not to worry about me."

Blaine could not help worrying. Lying in his dark, hot little bedroom in the villa that night, he kept remembering the weird experience of which Edith had told him. That uncanny sensation or dream of someone trying to supplant her in her own body.

A strange idea, that! Not a new one—in all ages, there had been people who claimed to have secret knowledge of how to make their minds, their personalities, leave their own body and enter another. But of course that was all just legend. Edith was just getting jumpy because of the oppressive psychological atmosphere of this place.

Blaine had himself felt the subtle shadow of that influence. As though a chilling, numbing spell reached out from this site of the vanished, barbaric metropolis of long ago, the dark city of cruelty and rites unmentionable, where living children had been fed to fiery Moloch, where high-born virgins had made unholy sacrifice to Tanit, where prisoners of war had been crucified, and an evil people had rioted in cruelty and lust until their city fell.

Blaine told himself restlessly that he too would

soon be jittery if he let himself dwell on the dark horrors of old Carthage. An archaeologist ought to be objective. The blood and pain and sadism that had weltered here in the old Punic city had passed long ago. The white stars peering through his window had not seen that black, accursed metropolis for more than two thousand years.

But still Blaine could not sleep. He gave up the effort and climbed out of bed, thrusting his feet into his slippers and reached in the dark for his cigarettes. Then, careful not to arouse the others, he walked out through the dark villa and stood in his pajamas on the terrace in front, smoking.

The black, velvet night was moonless, a wonderful sky of stars tenting the sleeping world. In the starlight, the churned-up earth of the excavations down the slope was a vague obscurity. Beyond it slept the glimmering waters of the gulf, with the black masses of the mountains on the farther shore standing silent guard.

Blaine stared. Tonight there was something brooding and sentient about this lonely scene. As though the towers and battlements of old Carthage itself haunted the site of their ancient glory. As though the hell of human passions that had once raged in this place still vibrated in the hushed night.

He heard the door behind him open and turned quickly. Edith was coming out onto the starlit terrace.

She stopped at sight of him, and stared fixedly at him. He was amazed to discover that she wore only a sheer silk nightdress that hid no line of her firm, youthful little body.

"Edith, what's the matter?" Blaine asked anxiously as he went toward her. "Did your dreams bother you again?"

She stared up at him without replying. It seemed to Kenneth Blaine that her face was queerly white and strained, her eyes abnormally wide and dark in the dim light.

A thrill of fear pierced him as he looked down into her white, strange face.

"Edith, what's wrong?" he asked sharply. "It's I—Kenneth."

Edith spoke then. Her voice came hesitant and slow, as though she found the words with an effort.

"Kenneth—Kenneth Blaine," she said slowly, as if saying the name for the first time. "I remember, now. Of course."

She smiled up at him, a slow, heavy-lidded and half-mocking smile that he had never seen on her face before.

"Kenneth Blaine—who is in love with me," she said in that slow way, and then laughed throatily.

He stared at her, astounded. But Edith had turned and was now looking toward the starlit shore and sea.

He saw a strange, haunting look come into her changed white face as she gazed.

"Gone," she whispered, as though to herself. "Temples and towers and gods and men—gone as

though they had never been, into dust of ages."

Her eyes flashed, and her young breasts heaved under their thin silk covering.

"But Sharra still lives! And Ethbaal too, if—"

She seemed abruptly to remember Blaine's presence, and turned. He was staring stupefiedly at her. Now he found his voice, and clutched her smooth, bare shoulders in rising apprehension.

"Edith, are you out of your head? What does all this mean?"

Edith's wide, enigmatic eyes seemed to veil themselves as her heavy lids drooped lower.

"I—I have had strange dreams, Kenneth Blaine," she said slowly. "But I am all right now."

Blaine laughed shakily. "Good Lord, you frightened me half to death, Edith. I thought you were clear out of your mind."

He became suddenly aware that her warm, breathing body was close in his arm, and that she was making no effort to withdraw. Flushing, Blaine stepped back from her.

"Better go back to bed, Edith," he said strainedly. "You'll be all right now."

She studied him with that enigmatic, half-amused smile, then silently turned and re-entered the villa.

Blaine stared after her, a frown on his serious young face. He had never seen Edith act like that before. There had been something open and shameless about her looks and actions, something strange. And what had she meant by the queer words she had murmured as she gazed at the site below? Who were Sharra and Ethbaal?

It had been as though Edith were suddenly a stranger. And that thought brought a memory that swept Blaine's mind like a chilling wind. A memory of what she had told him that afternoon, of her queer dreams and what had seemed to happen in them.

Blaine stood, his clean-cut face stiff with intense thought. Then he laughed shortly. He was getting jumpy himself, he thought, to start imagining such things. He and Edith would have a good laugh over the whole thing at breakfast.

But in the sun-bright breakfast room the next morning, Blaine found Edith still—changed. When she entered in her simple white dress she looked more than ever like a youthful schoolgirl, and she greeted them quietly. Her father and Abel McPherson went on with their talk. But Kenneth Blaine watched the girl.

Edith was abnormally silent, listening without comment to the two senior archaeologists, watching them and Blaine and the servants with veiled eyes. She seemed even to inspect the food and silverware on the table as though she had never seen them before. She handled knife and fork hesitantly.

**B**LAINE'S vague fear increased. He could no longer doubt that Edith had undergone some deep mental change. Yet he told himself desperately that that incredible and monstrous suspicion that had come

to him could surely have no basis, that the girl's change had some natural explanation.

John Kerr was speaking, pointing through the window to the green shore beyond the fruitless excavations.

"We'll start the new digging this side of the inner harbor," Kerr was saying. "I believe now that that's where the Temple of Moloch must have been located."

Edith spoke in a slow, drawing voice. "You are wrong," she told her father. "The Temple of Moloch lay west of the harbor. Dig beyond that little mound, and you should find it."

They all stared at her. And her father's tone was crushing when he spoke.

"Are you venturing to give us directions? What in the devil do you know about ancient Carthage?"

"Nothing," she answered lightly. "It was just an idea."

But Blaine saw an amused flicker, a mocking gleam, in her half-veiled eyes. A queer chill ran through him.

And when he and Kerr and old McPherson had gone down the slope to where the Arab laborers were gathering, he spoke suddenly to Kerr.

"Let's start the digging in the place Edith pointed out, sir," Blaine suggested earnestly. "I believe there's a chance the Temple was there."

Kerr was amused. "You're so in love with my daughter that you're willing to follow up her wild guesses, eh?"

"Not that," Blaine answered, flushing. "It's just that it occurred to me that spot hadn't been touched by previous expeditions, and we might find something there."

"Maybe you're right," John Kerr said reflectively. "We might try it—it's all mostly guesswork here, anyway."

Abel McPherson sniffed scornfully. "If we're going to work by a lassie's whims, 'tis fine scientists we are."

Kenneth Blaine felt a strong inner tension as he helped Kerr and McPherson start the Arabs to digging beyond the little mound. He told himself that they would find nothing of the lost temple here, and that finding nothing would quiet the impossible and monstrous suspicion that kept haunting him. It would prove that that wild idea of his about Edith's transformation was just nonsense.

The Arabs, in their lazy way, had dug for three hours when a group of them uttered shrill yells. Blaine and the two senior archaeologists went to them on the run. And Kerr yelped with excitement when he saw what they had uncovered.

It was only a broken wall of massive stone blocks, blackened and cracked by fire. But upon one of those blocks was carved a design of a grotesque, bull-headed human figure.

"Moloch!" yelled John Kerr. "By heaven, we've done it—we've hit the temple at last!"

He shouted to the staring Arabs. "Dig, you sons

of perdition! Double pay for every man of you tonight!"

Then in the midst of his exultant excitement, John Kerr frowned wonderingly.

"Now how in the devil did Edith ever guess that this is the spot where the temple stood in old Carthage?"

Kenneth Blaine made no answer. Blaine was staring at the uncovered, age-old blocks, with a wild look on his face.

How had Edith known so certainly where that temple had stood in ancient Carthage? Could his dark and horrible suspicion about the girl be true?

## CHAPTER 2

### Priestess of Carthage

EVERYTHING at dinner that night seemed a little unreal, to Kenneth Blaine's strained mind. He was unable to join in the excited, exultant talk of John Kerr and old McPherson about the newly-discovered temple and their plans to unearth it. He sat inwardly taut, unable to take his eyes from Edith.

The girl ate in demure silence. Seldom did she raise her eyes from the table. But Blaine could have sworn that several times when the senior archaeologists voiced confident speculations about the rites and customs in that temple of old Carthage, a mocking gleam of amusement appeared in Edith's eyes.

Neither her father nor the old Scotsman noticed her odd silence, engrossed as they were in the new discovery. But as the meal progressed, Blaine felt his tension grow unbearable. He told himself that he must lay at rest his appalling and incredible suspicion, that he was letting himself believe in weird fancies that could surely have no basis in reality.

He sought out Edith on the terrace after dinner, while the two older men pored over their scale-maps in the library.

The girl's slim little figure stood in the darkness with her back to him, gazing intently down at the dark excavations. She turned quickly at his approach, and greeted him with a slow smile.

"Edith, were you bothered last night by the dreams you told me of?" Blaine asked her earnestly.

The girl looked up surprisedly. "What dreams?"

Blaine stared. "Why, surely you remember—those nightmares you had, in which you felt that someone was trying to push your mind out of your body, and take possession of it."

Edith stiffened, and a queer flash appeared in her eyes. But in a moment, she relaxed.

"I had forgotten I told you that, Kenneth Blaine," she answered. "No, the dreams do not trouble me any more. I do not think that they will ever trouble me again."

She laughed a little. And Blaine felt the trouble in his mind increasing, like a growing cloud.

The girl was looking down again at the black ob-



scurity of the excavations.

"Strange, to think that of mighty Carthage there remains but a few blackened blocks of stone," she murmured. "That priests and priestesses, worshippers and rulers and slaves, are all gone like ghosts upon the wind."

Her small fists clenched. "I am glad that the Romans who pulled Carthage down were themselves pulled down in after ages! Yes, I wish I could have seen their city fall to a conqueror as Carthage did."

"Edith, you're talking wildly!" Blaine burst out. "You talk as though you were one of the old Carthaginians yourself."

The girl gave him that queer, mocking smile. "It is only that old Carthage seems so real here," she said. She turned away, and entered the villa.

Kenneth Blaine stared after her a little wildly. His head was spinning with crazy thoughts.

Such a thing as he suspected *couldn't* happen, he told himself. This was the twentieth century, and he was a scientist, not a credulous peasant. He must keep a grip on reality, and not let imagination run away with him.

But the astounding change in Edith—it was undeniable. She seemed a different person entirely. A person not entirely of this world or time. And the dreams she had spoken of—

Blaine strode into the house. Edith had retired and so had old McPherson, but Doctor John Kerr was rolling up his maps.

He hailed Blaine genially. "My boy, this day's work will put all our names in archaeological history. When we finish uncovering that temple—"

"Doctor Kerr," Blaine interrupted, "have you noticed anything unusual about Edith today?"

Kerr stared. "Why, no. I've been too excited to pay much attention to her. She's not ill, is she?"

"I don't know," Blaine muttered, "but I think something's wrong with her, something queer. She's been strange, silent, all day. Like a different person."

Kerr was unworried. "She's just lonesome and homesick here, Kenneth. She'll snap out of it."

Blaine hesitated, on the verge of telling his senior all that was in his mind. But he could not get the words out. To utter such a crazy idea would be to make Kerr think that he had lost his wits.

In silence, he went slowly to his bedroom. The house grew still. Lying in the darkness, Blaine tried vainly to make common sense push his fantastic suspicions out of his mind. But as the hours dragged by, the incredible idea rooted deeper in his thoughts.

HE heard his bedroom door open softly. Startled, Blaine snapped on the little battery-lamp on his night table. As it cast a glow over his white-plastered room, he stared amazedly at his visitor.

It was Edith. She wore a loose silk negligee and her little feet were naked. Her pert, pretty face still wore the unfamiliar, brooding expression, and her blue eyes were fixed with enigmatic intensity on his face

as she came to his bedside.

"Edith—good Lord!" Blaine exclaimed, sitting up in astonishment. "What are you doing here?"

"Are you so surprised that I come, Kenneth?" she asked calmly, sitting down on the bedside.

There was an amused mockery in her voice. Her eyes were dark, wide, unfathomable, as they fixed on his. Her red lips were indolently parted.

Blaine felt that chill wind as from an alien world sweep him again. Could this be the Edith Kerr he knew?

"You shouldn't be here, in my room at this hour, Edith," he said, trying to keep his voice steady.

"Why not, when we love each other, Kenneth Blaine?" she asked, half-innocently, half-mockingly.

Smiling, she bent forward. Her lips crushed his mouth in a slow, burning kiss that was the very essence of pagan passion.

Blaine's head reeled. He had kissed Edith before. But this was not Edith. This was—

"Someone else," he whispered hoarsely as she drew back her mocking face. "You're not Edith—you're someone else, in her body. I've suspected it all day."

"How can you think that, Kenneth Blaine?" she asked calmly. "Look into my eyes—you will see that I am still the girl you knew."

Blaine looked frozenly into her eyes. Wide, darkened eyes that were like windows into violet space, into abysses inconceivable. There were little lights spinning in those violet gulfs—little spinning lights—

His consciousness of his surroundings, of his own body, was fading. He was not aware any longer of himself or of the girl into whose eyes he was rigidly staring. He was aware only of those spinning lights that seemed to drug and fascinate his will.

"Hypnotism!" his subconscious shouted frantically to him. "You're being hypnotized—break free from this!"

He could not do it! He could not stir or speak. He was lost in violet abysses of space in which great forces roared like unearthly winds, and brilliant lights spun and flashed in a pattern that was strangely soothing and drugging.

Dimly, dimly, as though from remote gulfs far beyond the abysses in which he swam, he heard the voice of the girl. Only, he knew that it was no physical voice but a mental one that reached his mind.

"Yes, fool, I am a stranger in the body and brain of this girl!" that silver mental voice was crying. "I am Sharra of old Carthage—Sharra, high priestess of Tanit, who have flung my mind across the ages and seized this girl's body, to escape my doomed city!"

"You modern men who know so much—this thing you do *not* know fully—this power of the human mind to travel in time into past or future. For the conscious mind is but an immaterial webwork of electric force, residing in the brain. And when the ancient secret is known, that immaterial consciousness can be flung back or forward at will and can force exchange of bodies with other minds in the distant ages



it reaches!

"I, Sharra of Carthage, know that ancient secret. So I was able to hurl my conscious mind forward into the future, and to force this girl's mind from her body so that I could take possession of it! To force her consciousness back into the discarded body which I left in doomed Ethbaal!

"Now I have her body and brain, her subconscious memories and knowledge, but *my* mind and personality rule them. Thus have I escaped the doomed city which the Romans were about to destroy. And when I have helped my lover, the suffete Ethbaal, to escape likewise into *your* body, then our triumph over time and doom will be complete!"

Kenneth Blaine heard that exultant mental cry as though from remotest distances, through the roaring violet haze in which he seemed to be floating.

And Blaine knew—horror! Horror that the thing he had suspected had happened to Edith, and was about to happen to himself. An incredible theft of bodies across time!

"Ethbaal!" the silvery mental cry of Sharra was echoing through the roaring violet abyss. "Ethbaal, the man's body is ready! Come quickly!"

And Blaine seemed to hear another and different mental cry, fainter and farther but growing rapidly louder.

"I come, Sharra! Help me to force him completely from his body!"

Blaine felt an impact of terrific mental force upon his darkened consciousness. He felt a rending, tearing sensation that was not physical but psychic.

He knew dimly that he, his real personality, the non-material electrical complex of his conscious mind, was being forced out of his brain and body. Frantically, he struggled with his will against the force.

"The man resists, Sharra!" stabbed Ethbaal's fearful, angry mental cry. "Help me!"

Full force of the two minds of Ethbaal and Sharra crushed against Kenneth Blaine's consciousness. And suddenly he felt a tremendous shock, a giddy rush through dimensionless, unguessable spaces—and then blackness.

Out of that blackness, Blaine came slowly back to consciousness. He was no longer in the hazy abysses, and the mental forces attacking him had ceased. He could feel his body again, and the soft surface on which he lay.

A tremendous wave of relief surged through Blaine. He shuddered with the reaction from the hideous peril that had threatened him.

"Thank God!" he muttered, "I've escaped from—"

HE opened his eyes. And his lips froze, his body went rigid, as he stared in uncomprehending amazement.

He was not in his bedroom in the villa. He was lying in a barbaric chamber with black marble walls, upon whose alabaster ceiling sprawled the black coils of a huge painted serpent. The closed door was

guarded by two monstrous, silver, fish-headed idols. Through the open, unglazed windows poured a blazing flood of hot *midday* sunlight.

Blaine staggered stupefiedly to his feet from the copper couch on which he had been lying. He looked down amazedly at his strange costume. He wore a brass breastplate over a linen kirtle, high brazen greaves on his legs, purple leather boots on his feet. A short curved sword and dagger hung at his belt, and a crested helmet lay nearby. And Blaine felt that his body was much *bigger*.

Wildly, he looked around the barbaric room. His eyes riveted upon a polished copper mirror on the wall. He stared into it, and he felt his brain rock to the shock of what he saw.

It was not his own face, not Kenneth Blaine's serious, clean-cut face, that looked back at him. It was a dark, aquiline, cruel-eyed face with a short, curled black beard masking harsh lips, that stared back from the copper mirror. He was in another man's body!

"Ethbaal!" he choked wildly to himself. "Ethbaal, the suffete of old Carthage—Sharra helped him force my mind to exchange bodies across the ages—"

Blaine staggered to the open windows. He looked forth upon a scene that sent his reason tottering.

Ancient Carthage—the Carthage of a century and a half before Christ—lay in the blazing sunlight before him!

Blaine was looking down on the monster metropolis from a room in the massive Citadel that crowned its highest point, the Byrsa hill. From the brutal, square black mass of the Citadel, guarded by tall cypresses, the city sloped to north and east and west, a vast mass of flat-roofed buildings of white stone and plaster, crowded along narrow streets and bounded by a mighty triple wall that was studded with crenellated guard-towers. Beyond the round Cothon, or military harbor, crowded with anchored war-galleys, lay the outer harbor and its defensive mole and the blue sheet of the gulf.

The Carthage of the past, the Carthage of history—stretching before Kenneth Blaine's stupefied gaze! And he saw that it was Carthage at war, defending itself. Soldiers on the walls were using bows and javelins and catapults to repel the attacks of disciplined masses of Roman troops who advanced again and again to attack the walls. The whir of catapults and crash of huge stones and whizz of arrows rose even above the babel of cries from the fearful, motley crowds that choked the narrow streets.

"Good God!" Blaine cried hoarsely. "I'm trapped here in old Carthage, two thousand years in the past—in another man's body!"

## CHAPTER 3

### In Tanit's Temple

BLAINE felt himself tottering on the verge of madness. This incredible thing *couldn't* have hap-

pened! It was surely only a crazy dream.

Yet he knew with inexorable certainty that it was no dream, that it was reality. He, Kenneth Blaine of twentieth century America, had by some hell's magic of ancient mental science been catapulted into the body of a man of ancient Carthage. Into the body of Ethbaal, one of the two suffetes or elected kings of this barbaric city of antiquity.

Those Roman legions besieging the walls out there—that was the reason why Sharra and Ethbaal had made use of a forgotten sorcery of science to fling their minds across the ages into new bodies, had forced exchange of bodies. They wanted to escape Carthage before the Romans conquered it and destroyed it and its people.

"I've got to get back!" Blaine told himself desperately. "I've got to get back to my own body, my own time!"

And then a new thought flashed through his chaotically seething mind like lightning lancing through storm.

"Edith! She—her mind—is somewhere here in the body of the high priestess Sharra!"

There was a sudden loud and frantic knocking at the door of the black marble chamber. Blaine spun around, startled.

"Ethbaal!" a woman's voice was crying from outside the door. "What has happened to you? Let me in!"

The woman's cry was in a strange, harsh language, the ancient Punic tongue. Yet Blaine *understood* her.

He understood her, and he recognized her voice. It was Lanash, his wife—or, rather, the wife of Ethbaal.

Blaine reeled in the face of this new mystery. How could he, Kenneth Blaine, understand that language and know these things?

Then he dimly comprehended. It was his *conscious* mind that had been forcibly transferred, that now inhabited the brain and body of the suffete Ethbaal. But there had been no transfer of the *subconsciousness*, which lay physically recorded in the brain-cells. So that he now possessed, along with Ethbaal's body, the Carthaginian's subconscious memories and knowledge.

He went to the door and slid back the silver bolt with unsteady fingers. The woman entered with a rush.

"Ethbaal!" she cried fearfully, gripping his arms and looking up at him. "What is wrong? Why have you locked yourself in here for the last hour? There is fighting at the lower harbor wall—the Romans are attacking strongly, and your soldiers are calling for you!"

Lanash, woman of Carthage who was—his wife! Or at least, the wife of the man whose body he now wore.

She was dark and beautiful and dangerous-looking as a panther. Her black hair was piled high, and she wore a long red simarre or gown embroidered

with black serpents, and confined by a dark leather girdle studded with brilliant gems. Her heavily-jewelled arms were bare to the shoulder.

Her midnight-black eyes flashed yellow with alarm and suspicion as she looked up into Blaine's face. Bewildered as he was, his senses reeled from the strong perfume of musk and nard that rose from this barbaric beauty.

"Ethbaal, what means it that you lock yourself away like this?" Lanash cried again. The suspicion flared stronger in her eyes as she added. "Have you been plotting something with that accursed wench of Tanit—Sharra?"

"Sharra?" Blaine repeated numbly, only dimly aware that he was subconsciously speaking in the harsh Punic. "What makes you think of her?"

Jealousy flashed hot in Lanash's eyes. "I know that temple wench! She still loves you and seeks to take you from me!" she cried. "Aye, and it has seemed to me, my husband, that you have returned her soft looks.

"I would kill you myself, Ethbaal, before I would let her have you!" she cried furiously. "Yes, even now when the Romans batter at our gates and Carthage rocks toward its doom, I will not let Sharra take you!"

Blaine tried to steady his spinning mind. This was no dream—this was reality—he was in the body of Ethbaal, and he must play the part of Ethbaal until he could find some scheme to get Edith and himself back to their own bodies, their own age.

"Be silent, Lanash," he said unsteadily in the Punic. "Sharra means nothing to me. I must go, now, to the wall where the Romans attack."

"Your chariot is waiting," Lanash said, her rage fading. Abruptly she wound hot arms around his neck, clinging to him. "Be careful in the fighting, Ethbaal! But a few days of life may remain to us, since soon the accursed spawn of Rome may break in upon us. Be not too rash, lest we lose even these last few days!"

He put Lanash aside, and moved haltingly out of the room into a dusky black marble corridor.

Blaine's numbed, dazed mind held room for but one objective. He must go to Sharra—to Sharra, the high priestess of Tanit whose body must now hold Edith's mind.

He strode unsteadily down the corridor. Gray-faced priests in flowing purple robes, fearful-looking, obese aristocrats, half-naked Greek and Nubian slaves, bowed to him as he passed.

As he emerged from the Citadel onto the broad stone terrace on its northern front, a rank of brazen Carthaginian guards lifted their heavy spears in salute to him.

"The chariot of Ethbaal!" shouted a captain.

The chariot, drawn by four black horses and driven by a giant, swarthy Numidian, came with a rush of trampling hoofs and rumbling wheels across the terrace.

Blaine stepped in and ordered:

"To the Temple of Tanit!"

The Numidian looked amazed. He faltered, "But master—the fighting at the lower harbor wall—"

"You heard me!" snapped Blaine. "To Tanit's temple, and quickly!"

Scaredly, the charioteer turned and sent his long thonged lash cracking above the horses. The heavy chariot leaped forward with a creaking rush.

It raced down one of the crooked, cobbled and narrow streets that led from the Byrsa, or hill on which the Citadel dominated the city. Blaine saw men and women and children leaping hastily aside to avoid the reckless rush of his vehicle.

In the crowded streets, Blaine glimpsed not only dark Carthaginian men and women in long robes, but also a motley horde from many other races. Negro warriors in lion skins, white Greeks with great bronze shields, hook-nosed Phoenician seamen, Egyptian slaves—all the races that peopled the dying Carthaginian empire.

They shouted wildly, raising hands in supplication to Blaine as his chariot rushed past them.

"Save us, o master!" they pleaded. "Save us from the Romans!"

Still others were silent in despair, and mothers were weeping as they held their infants close. A burning-eyed priest in a dead-black robe was yelling warnings of imminent doom.

"The great god Moloch is wroth that our sacrifices to him have not been greater!" he was crying. "Moloch must be appeased with more offerings, or we shall be conquered and destroyed."

**S**ACRIFICES to Moloch? Blaine shuddered, as he heard. He knew what that meant. The sacrifices to that most hideous god that had ever been worshipped on earth had been living children that were fed to the idol's fires.

Carthage, feeling itself doomed by the Roman siege, was resorting to dread holocausts of sacrifices to placate Moloch and save itself.

"Moloch will save us, if our offerings are great enough!" he heard the priest still shouting behind him.

Blaine felt, even in the chaos of his crazy thoughts, a flash of pity. These people were doomed—no worship of their gods would save them. For he, Kenneth Blaine, *knew* what the course of history must be—knew that the Romans would conquer this place and put all its people to death and destroy it forever.

And—the thought crashed home—he and Edith would die here with the rest when the Romans broke in! Trapped in the bodies of Sharra and Ethbaal, they would meet death like these others, unless they found some way to get back to their own bodies and time.

What way was there? The question howled hopelessly in Blaine's mind as the chariot rushed on with him through the teeming, fear-ridden, barbaric city. How could he, who knew nothing of the diabolical

secret science Sharra had used to effect this incredible transposition of minds across the ages, hope to undo what she had done?

The chariot drew up before a vast enclosure, a great grove of huge plane trees surrounded by a low wall. Through the dense green foliage loomed the domed mass of a yellow marble structure that Blaine subconsciously recognized as the Temple of Tanit, the Carthaginian goddess of love. He leaped out of the chariot and strode through the open gate of the enclosure.

Blaine felt his mind rock again to the wonder of the experience, as in the body of Ethbaal, he strode along the paths of white marble-dust that wound toward the temple through the dense sacred groves. In these murmurous precincts the babel of the city could not be heard, and Tanit's worshippers were thronging unheeding of the fighting going on at the city's distant walls.

The green, shadowy groves held many hundreds of people. Everywhere were the priestesses of Tanit, girls in transparent gowns of violet gauze who wore Tanit's sacred symbol upon their half-naked breasts. And with them were men, soldiers of Carthage from many races, and citizens and merchants—all of them too accustomed to the siege to let the fighting keep them from this place.

Men and priest-girls were constantly disappearing into secret bowers in the shady groves. Blaine shivered with repulsion as he passed. He knew how Tanit was worshipped, and what sacrifice was made here by every girl in Carthage who reached marriageable age. To think of Edith here—in the body of this unholy temple's high priestess!

Blaine entered a long portico of phallic statues, amid which the white doves of Tanit flashed like streaks of light. He stepped from this directly into a great hall where troops of chanting priest-girls held smoking censers of suffocating incense before the huge, bland-faced idol of many-breasted Tanit.

To a priestess who approached him with a low reverence, Blaine spoke sharply, "Take me to the high priestess Sharra, at once."

The girl's antimony-painted eyes widened, and she seemed distressed.

"The high priestess is not—herself, master," she faltered. "She is stricken by the goddess—her mind wanders."

"Nevertheless, take me to her," Blaine insisted harshly.

The girl bowed lower before his command. "Follow me, lord Ethbaal."

She led the way up an unrailed stair of stone that climbed the side of the vast hall. In a cedar-walled corridor on the upper level, she opened a door blazoned with gold figures of Tanit.

**B**LAINE stepped into a silk-hung chamber set about with small statuettes of the goddess. As he entered, a woman who had lain weeping on black

cushions, sprang up fearfully.

She faced him, a quivering, terrified figure. Blaine stared into her face, unable to speak. He knew that she was Sharra, the high priestess—but only Sharra's body.

She was quite tall. Her high-piled black hair made her look taller. The tight white silk bodice, slashed between the breasts, and the temple-skirt she wore molded a slim-waisted, voluptuously rounded figure. Upon her wrists were heavy bracelets of gold and emeralds, and large pearls adorned the bare, rosy toes that protruded from her open sandals of soft blue leather.

Her face was long and dark and exotically lovely, with a heavy, languorous-drooping red mouth and black eyes whose lids were darkened with kohl. This woman, to Blaine's first glance, was the very embodiment of barbaric, pagan beauty.

Then as he saw the quivering of her limbs, the tremble of her moist red lips and the horror and fear that lay deep within her eyes, he took a quick step forward.

"Edith!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "Is it you, Edith?"

For a moment, the woman stared at him in utter frozen unbelief.

"You—you are Ethbaal," she whispered in the Punic. "I know that, somehow—but how can you know who I really am?"

"Edith, it's me—Ken Blaine!" he cried. "In Ethbaal's body, yes—but Blaine, nevertheless. The same thing happened to me as to you—"

Next moment, she swayed forward into his arms and clung to him in an agony of sobbing.

As he held her, with her musk-drugged black hair crushing his cheek, Blaine felt an uncontrollable chill. This was all so incredible! He and Edith, here in each other's arms—yet not in their own bodies but in two utterly strange bodies in this utterly strange city of the past.

And—the thought shook him—the real Sharra and Ethbaal possessed *their* bodies, back in their own life far across the abyss of time.

"Ken—Ken—," she was sobbing. "I've been half-mad since I woke up—in this body, here in this ghastly place."

She looked up at him, her dark, exotic eyes swimming with tears.

"Ken, this is all a dream, a nightmare, isn't it? It must be! It can't be real!"

"It's real, Edith," he said as steadily as he could, his arms tightening around her quivering, naked shoulders. "We've been forced back across time, into these bodies, by Sharra and Ethbaal. Unbelievable—but true!"

"But how could it happen?" she asked tearfully. "How could anything cross time?"

"No *thing* could cross time, Edith," he said. "But the conscious mind—the immaterial complex of electricity that is our real personalities—is not a thing, is non-material. It can apparently be projected at will

across the time-dimension into past or future, by one who knows the secret.

"Sharra knows the secret. God knows how—but there have been many legends that peoples of the past learned much of mental powers. Powers which we moderns, in our concentration upon physical and material science, never have learned. Our psychologists, such as Dunne with his projection of the mind into the future in dreams and Rhine with his discovery of extra-sensory powers, are just beginning to discover astounding things about the mind which were known to some few people for ages in the past.

"Sharra had that secret knowledge and power," Blaine went on, "and she used it—to project her mind across time into your body, forcing your own mind back into her body. And then she helped Ethbaal do the same thing to me. So that they two could escape from Carthage before the Romans destroyed it and its people."

"But we can't stay here—in these bodies, this horrible city and time!" she cried. Her dark, lovely face was pallid. "I nearly went mad when I awoke here in this woman's body. There was no warning—in my sleep I felt again that dream of someone trying to force my mind out of my body, and then there was a shock and I woke here.

"And the things I've seen here!" She covered her face with her jewelled, painted hands. "Cruelty and horror unimaginable, people frantic with fear that the Romans will break in, horrible rites—"

"I know, Edith," he husked, tightening his arms around her. "But don't despair—we'll get back somehow to our own bodies and time—"

"How can we?" she cried wildly. "We're prisoned here in these bodies and we don't know the secret power they used to bring this about. And when the Romans conquer the city, as you and I know they will, we die like everyone else here and—"

The door of the silken chamber of the high priestess burst suddenly open. Blaine whirled.

It was Lanash who entered. Wife of Ethbaal—of himself! Her midnight eyes were raging yellow hell-fires of jealousy and hate as she looked at the woman in Blaine's arms.

"I knew it would be so!" she cried ragingly. "I knew, my husband, that you were not going to the fighting by the harbor wall, but to visit your paramour here!"

She rushed forward, and a silver dagger flashed in her hand, striking at the naked breast of Sharra-Edith.

"Death for you, Sharra!" she panted as she struck with the knife.

## CHAPTER 4

### The Jealousy of Lanash

BLAINE plunged and caught the wrist of Lanash just as the silver dagger in her hand was touching



Sharra's breast.

He twisted Lanash's wrist roughly, and the little weapon clattered to the floor. But the woman struggled in his grasp like a wildcat, seeking to get free to throw herself upon the priestess.

"Wench of Tanit!" she raged. "I knew that you sought to theft my husband from me. And now I find him here in your arms."

"Lanash, be silent!" Blaine exclaimed, seeking to quiet the furiously struggling woman.

"Be silent, when you leave me for this woman?" Lanash cried, her eyes pure yellow with passion. "Do you think you can cast me aside like a Malquan dancing-girl? I am a daughter of the house of Barca—and your wife!"

Blaine groaned inwardly. How could he quiet this tigress of a woman? He could not tell her the truth, that he was a stranger in Ethbaal's body even as Edith was in Sharra's, for she would never believe such an incredible assertion.

Sharra-Edith stood bewildered, still stupefied by the sudden furious attack, staring with wide, black eyes at the raging woman whom Blaine held.

Abruptly through the open door came running two Carthaginian officers. Both were covered with blood, their armor battered, and the foremost, a tall, brawny soldier, was gasping for breath as he ran toward Blaine.

"Lord Ethbaal, the Romans have breached the walls by the lower harbor!" he cried. "Come quickly, or our men will give way!"

Blaine stood irresolute, still holding the raging Lanash. Subconsciously he had recognized the two officers, and knew this brawny officer was Mago, one of his captains in the army of Carthage.

"Go and bid the men stand fast, Mago," he ordered. "I'll come presently."

"You'll come now or the Hundred will have you crucified as a traitor to Carthage!" cried Mago. "It's your duty as master—why do you linger here with these women?"

"Don't go!" exclaimed Sharra-Edith fearfully to Blaine. "Don't leave me in this place!"

"If you delay longer," Mago said furiously, "you'll be on a cross within an hour—and this priestess with you!"

"I've got to go," Blaine told her desperately. "It's death for us both if I don't."

He swung to the panting young officer behind Mago. "Guard the door of the priestess Sharra's chambers while I'm gone," he ordered. "Let no one enter—especially my wife."

Lanash was white with rage. "So, my husband, you admit openly to Carthage that you cleave to this temple girl instead of me? I'll avenge this insult, Ethbaal! I'll kill this priestess whose magic has made you forsake me!"

Unheeding her raving threats, Blaine pushed her out the door. The young officer prevented her from re-entering, standing guard with drawn sword.

The brawny Mago was tugging at Blaine's arm. "Quick, lord Ethbaal!"

Blaine called back, "I'll be back soon, Edith, and we'll find some way out of this devil's trap."

Then he and Mago hurried down through the temple, leaving Lanash in the corridor above, raving appalling threats after him, insane with jealousy and wounded pride.

They rushed out to the blazing sunset-lit street where Blaine's chariot waited. He and Mago sprang into it, and he yelled to the Numidian driver:

"To the harbor! Quick!"

The Numidian's whip cracked and the horses leaped forward, with rumble of wheels and rush of ringing hoofs. Blaine's mind was a wild riot of emotions. He, Kenneth Blaine, hurrying to lead the Carthaginian defenders against the attacking hosts of Rome!

But he had to do it. If he didn't, if he failed in the duty that was Ethbaal's, he would be instantly executed as a traitor by the Hundred, the senate of Carthage. He, Kenneth Blaine, would die here in Ethbaal's body.

The chariot rushed recklessly through the sloping streets of the squalid lower town, toward the harbors. Men and women, children and slaves and wounded soldiers, were seething fearfully through the streets away from the walls. Clearly audible was the din and clash of battle from the wall where the attack had pierced.

Blaine's chariot rushed through the throngs and rattled around the circular Cothon or military harbor. The great inner wall of Carthage, towering fifty feet in the sunlight, loomed ahead. Upon its top, Carthaginian warriors were hurling javelins, arrows, great stones and ladles of boiling pitch upon the Romans outside.

"There is the breach!" Mago yelled over the din. "And see—our men give way!"

Blaine saw, ahead, the narrow crack in the walls which had been made by the Roman battering-rams.

Inside that crevasse were massed a horde of Carthaginian soldiery, fighting desperately with sword and spear to hold back the solid, disciplined masses of swarthy Romans who were forcing through the opening.

THE battering-rams of the Romans were still crashing away outside, to widen the breach. Their deafening thunder, and the whizz of arrows and javelins, and clash of swords and shrill battle-cries and death-yells, filled the air.

"The lord Ethbaal comes!" yelled some of the Carthaginian soldiers as the chariot rattled up. "Courage, comrades—the master is here!"

As Blaine leaped from the chariot, Mago pointed excitedly along the inside of the wall to a dozen great, gray, swaying beasts tethered not far away—some of the Carthaginian war-elephants.

"If we can push the Romans back outside the wall,



we can use the elephants to disperse them!" Mago shouted. "I've given the order—but first we must force the Romans out."

The brawny Carthaginian captain had drawn his sword, and Blaine jerked out his own curved, unfamiliar weapon. They ran forward into the battle at the breach, Blaine mechanically keeping beside the big captain.

"The master is here to lead us!" shouted the blood-covered, struggling Carthaginians. "Forward, comrades!"

"Charge them!" Blaine shouted. "Drive them back out!"

The Carthaginians surged forward with a fierce yell. The movement of their mass pushed Blaine and Mago into the forefront of the desperate fight.

Blaine had no time to think of the strangeness of his position. Hard, swarthy Roman faces and stabbing Roman swords and spears swirled in front of him. Blaine hacked out with his sword and was dimly amazed to find that he could handle it expertly, with all of Ethbaal's subconscious skill in swordsmanship.

He stabbed below the armor of one Roman, then swiftly sliced at the neck of another. He felt a spear-point graze his arm, but paid it no heed in the heat of this desperate fight. He almost forgot that he was



Blaine hacked out with his sword, slashing below the armor of a Roman

Kenneth Blaine—he was momentarily only another battle-made Carthaginian, like yelling Mago and the others.

The Romans gave way before the terrific assault and were slowly pushed back through the narrow breach into the open marshy land outside the walls. Across the marsh, whose scattered pools gleamed blood-red in the smoldering sunset, distant Roman masses of reinforcements were coming on the run. On either side loomed the huge timber battering-rams.

"Now—the elephants!" Mago's great voice yelled back through the wild turmoil, as they pushed the Romans forth.

"Stand clear!" Blaine shouted to the men around him, as the ground under them quivered. "The elephants come!"

Through the breach behind them, the huge beasts were coming in single file at a ground-rocking run. Blaine and Mago and their Carthaginians hastily leaped to the right and left, and the elephants rushed past them upon the mass of Romans facing them.

Trumpeting shrilly and horribly with upraised trunks, their iron-shod tusks gleaming in the dying sunset, they thundered into the Romans. Tusks and trunks caught and tossed the soldiers, huge feet trampled them, and the riders of the great beasts hurled their javelins down to add to the slaughter.

With cries of terror, the Romans broke and fled back from the fearful war-beasts.

"Now fire the battering-rams!" yelled Mago, as the Carthaginians uttered a fierce, triumphant cry.

"Hurry—the Roman reinforcements are coming!" Blaine shouted.

The *buccinas* or war-trumpets of the approaching Roman reinforcements were bellowing louder and closer out of the dusk-veiled marshland. Torches flared in the darkening dusk as the Carthaginians rushed toward the great rams. Their timbers flared up suddenly with a crackling roar, the leaping red flames throwing a quivering light out over the wild faces of Blaine's followers.

"Back into the city, men!" he shouted.

The Carthaginians obeyed, streaming hastily back through the break in the wall, and then laboring frenziedly under Mago's loud orders to close the breach.

Stones and timbers were rushed forward and flung into the breach. Rapidly the crack closed up. By the time the Roman reinforcements reached the outer side of the wall, the breach had been rudely repaired, and the Carthaginians were ready atop the wall to greet them with showers of arrows and javelins.

"We've held them!" exclaimed Mago. "But another such breach and they'll take the city. We can't keep them out forever."

Blaine, gasping, was wiping his sweat-dripping face when a hand tugged his arm and a girl's frantic voice sounded. "Lord Ethbaal!"

HE swung around. It was a scared-faced girl in a gauzy gown whom he recognized as one of the

priestesses of Tanit.

"The high priestess Sharra—," she panted above the din of fighting from the wall-top.

Blaine's brain took instant alarm, and he cried to her with fierce apprehension:

"Has anything happened to Sharra?"

"Soldiers and priests have come to the temple to seize her!" babbled the terrified girl. "The officer whom you left to guard her is trying to hold them off—I came to warn you—"

Blaine's heart went icy from the unexpected shock. Sharra—Edith—in danger!

He spun around and yelled through the darkness to his charioteer. The Numidian drove the vehicle up rapidly, the horses snorting and rolling their eyes wildly in the torchlight as they scented the blood on the dead bodies nearby.

Mago grasped Blaine's arm. "You can't leave the wall now when the Romans threaten another attack, Ethbaal!"

"I'm going!" Blaine cried fiercely, shaking loose the brawny captain's grip. And he cried to the Numidian, "To the temple of Tanit—and hurry!"

The chariot rushed through the darkness. Night was complete now, and the vast, black mass of Carthage loomed like an enormous thundercloud over Blaine as his chariot rattled furiously up the steep and narrow streets.

His mind was in an agony of apprehension for Edith. He could not guess who they were who had come to seize her but his fears were black and boundless. He was hardly aware of the dim crackle of fighting around the distant walls, or the crowds in the streets through which he passed.

Haggard, fear-wild men and women were streaming through all streets in torchlit throngs, all heading toward the west end of the metropolis. Blaine heard one name from all lips.

"Moloch!"

The Numidian charioteer turned a fearful face.

"I cannot go faster, master! The streets are full of the people who go to Moloch's temple for tonight's sacrifices!"

"Drive right through them!" Blaine shouted, his voice raw and wild.

The thronging, torchlit worshipers streaming toward the temple of Moloch recoiled in new alarm as the chariot of their lord thundered through the streets past them.

The chariot rushed up to the dark temple of Tanit, and Blaine leaped out. He had his bloody sword in his hand as he ran into the temple enclosure.

The torchlit interior of the temple was almost deserted. A few priestesses were huddling fearfully in a corner, some of them weeping.

Blaine sprang up the stairs to the cedar-walled corridor where he had left the young officer to guard Sharra's door. The officer, his face pale and his hand clutching a sword-wound below his shoulder, was staggering toward him.

"Sharra!" Blaine yelled. "Where is she?"

"They took her away," the wounded man gasped. "I tried to stop them, as you ordered, but they struck me down, and the priests of Moloch took her."

"Moloch!" Blaine reeled from the stunning shock of that dreadful name. "The priests of Moloch took Sharra?"

"Yes, lord—for sacrifice in tonight's rites!" the wounded man panted. "They said that only the offering of Tanit's own priestess could appease Moloch now and save our doomed city."

Blaine staggered, his heart seemed to stop beating. Edith—in Sharra's body—to be sacrificed this night to Moloch, dreadful, fiery idol, greatest god of Carthage! Edith, dying in Sharra's body, in that hideous way—

A woman's voice hissed beside him. "I *told* you I would have vengeance on that temple wench, Ethbaal!"

Blaine turned dazedly. It was Lanash who stood beside him, her beautiful face contorted with satisfied hate.

"You had Sharra seized as a sacrifice to Moloch!" he yelled wildly.

"Yes, I did it!" she flashed, venomous as a serpent. "I told the priests and people that Moloch was not satisfied with the sacrifice of children alone, that he wanted a bride also—that Tanit must be his bride, in the person of her high priestess, and that that alone would save doomed Carthage."

"You cannot save your lady love now, Ethbaal! The priests and the people would tear you to bits if you tried to halt the sacrifice. In an hour from now, Sharra passes into the waiting arms of Moloch!"

## CHAPTER 5

### Bride of Moloch

THE tawny flames of satisfied hate in Lanash' black eyes, the passionate triumph in her dark face, maddened Blaine.

He seized her throat with his hands, in wild urge to crush out the life of this woman whose jealousy had sentenced Edith to the most horrible of deaths.

"Kill me, my husband," jeered Lanash unfrightenedly. "Death is close for all in Carthage anyway, and I die happy knowing that Sharra has not escaped my vengeance."

"You fool, Sharra *has* escaped you, and so has Ethbaal!" Blaine hissed ragingly. "Sharra is already safe, in the body of a girl two thousand years from now, and so is Ethbaal safe in *my* body in that same time. And that innocent girl wears Sharra's body, and I wear your husband's body!"

Blaine spoke only in the raging passion of his fear and horror. He did not expect for a moment that Lanash would credit the thing he told her.

But Lanash paled terribly, as she heard. She stared wildly into his face, trembling in every fiber.

"I *thought* there was something strange about you this day!" she cried suddenly. "Then it is true—the minds of Sharra and my husband Ethbaal have escaped into the future—"

A wild and terrible anger flared in her beautiful face. She raised her quivering arms in an imprecatory gesture.

"Curse Sharra—curse her, all ye gods! She has used an ancient secret to flee with my husband from this doomed city, and she and he are safe to live and love while I must die here!"

Blaine was startled out of his wild wrath by the passionate cry of Lanash. He slowly released his hold on her.

"Lanash, you believe then?" he exclaimed. "You know of this secret power of hurling the mind into new bodies across time?"

"Aye, I know," she said fiercely, "for I learned it of the same wise man from whom accursed Sharra learned it. That secret knowledge has been passed down by a few in every race from age to age, from ancient Egypt to Babylon and Tyre. Few who knew it have ever dared to risk using it, so perilous is it, but now Sharra has used it to flee into far years with my husband. Why did I not kill her before she could do it?"

BLAINE gripped her bare arms. "Lanash, if you know that secret, then you can help the girl and myself to undo what has been done, to get back to our own bodies in our own time?"

The raving Lanash stiffened at that suggestion. A fire of terrible hope sprang suddenly into her black eyes.

"If I could do that!" she hissed with volcanic passion. "If I could only force Sharra and my traitor husband back into their own bodies here, to meet the doom they sought to flee—"

"Will you try it, Lanash?" Blaine asked, wild hope springing up in him.

Lanash' passion-ridden eyes narrowed, and her nostrils dilated.

"Sharra—her body—is a prisoner of Moloch's priests now," she said tensely, half to herself. "She dies a sacrifice within the hour—gods, why did I not know the truth before I incited them to take her as an offering!"

She added tautly, "But if the priests will allow us to be with her before the sacrifice takes place, I might be able to do the thing, to send her and you back—to force the two guilty fugitives to return—"

"Come on, then—there's no time to lose!" Blaine cried, his nerves quivering.

Lanash hastened with him past the wounded officer who had sunk insensible. In the torchlit temple hall below, great Tanit's idol still smiled placidly forth upon the few scared priestesses who huddled in the shadowy corners.

Blaine and the woman hastened out into the starlit night, through the dark sacred groves to the cobbled

street where his chariot waited. Lanash sprang up into it with him.

"To the Temple of Moloch—the rear entrance!" she cried. "Drive fast, Idril!"

As they started, Blaine heard from the outer walls the dull, monotonous thunder of the Roman rams battering the wall anew, and the yelling of the Carthaginian defenders.

"It may be that this is the last night of Carthage!" Lanash cried over the clatter of hoofs. "But if so, Sharra and my treacherous husband shall meet death here in their own bodies with me, if my art can force them back."

"Faster, Idril!" she called a moment later to the crouching charioteer. "I hear already the chanting of Moloch's worshippers!"

Blaine could hear it too, from the western end of the black, enormous city—a dim, solemn chanting of many thousands of voices that slowly rose and fell, and that chilled his blood.

Through nighted Carthage the chariot raced, toward the west where a red glow of torches quivered against the sky. Now they were so near that the loud, deep, solemn chanting drowned out the dull and distant thunder of the Roman rams.

Blaine made out the Temple of Moloch, looming massive and black and ominous against the stars, a cubical mass of stone crowned by a pyramidal tower and facing a huge circular plaza. He saw that the plaza was crowded with a tight-packed throng of tens of thousands of men and women, their pallid faces turned in the torchlight toward the frowning facade of the temple as they chanted.

The charioteer skirted the plaza and drove around into the deep shadow of a narrow alley behind the enormous temple. Lanash leaped out and led the way along the side of the vast edifice.

"See!" she cried, pointing toward the plaza. "Already they bring Moloch forth for the sacrifices!"

Blaine, staring, felt his blood go cold. Amid solemn chanting and clash of cymbals and blare of horns, a gigantic figure was moving slowly out of the temple's immense doors onto the plaza.

It was a fifty-foot brazen statue of a grotesque, bestial figure—a colossal, sitting man with a bull's head, his giant brass arms outstretched from his breast, in which yawned a square opening.

"Moloch! Baal Ammon!" the Carthaginian crowd was shrieking now as the chant ceased. "Save us, great lord, from the doom that threatens us!"

Blaine glimpsed priests busy at the bottom of the giant brazen figure. He saw flames shoot up inside it as the store of combustible material in its hollow interior was fired.

His senses shook at that hideous sight. Great Moloch, sitting in giant majesty, fire shooting from his eyes and the opening in his breast, his huge arms outstretched for the sacrifices.

"Come!" Lanash was exclaiming, tugging at his wrist. "There is little time left us."

She pulled him through a doorway, down a dark stone corridor and into a vast, shadowy stone hall whose overpowering gloom was hardly lightened by flaring torches.

Black-robed priests were here in numbers, most of them excitedly hurrying out to help tend the god. Others were gathered around a group of several scores of small children, who were dressed in pure white robes and were looking scaredly about and whimpering.

"There is the high priest of the god!" cried Lanash. She sprang forward, Blaine stumbling after her.

The high priest of Moloch was a terrifying figure, wearing a tall copper headdress like the bull's head of his idol, his black gown worked with silver designs of the god. His thin, bearded face was fanatic, his eyes flashing half insanely.

"The sufete Ethbaal and his wife!" he exclaimed when he saw Lanash and her companion. "What do you here?"

"We must see Tanit's priestess before she is sacrificed," Lanash told him swiftly.

The high priest recoiled. "No! She is sacred now to the god whose bride she soon becomes. No man can approach Moloch's bride now save we, his priests, or Moloch will not be moved to save our city from the enemy."

"You'll let us see her or I'll call back my troops from the walls and let the Romans enter the city now!" Blaine threatened fiercely.

"You think to rescue her from her fate!" the high priest accused him passionately. "It is well known, lord Ethbaal, that you have long secretly loved this Sharra."

"We do not dream of rescuing her!" Lanash told him vehemently. "Would I, who encouraged you to choose her as Moloch's bride, attempt now to save her? And can you not post your guards outside the door of her cell while we see her, to make sure?"

The high priest's lips compressed. "I will do that," he rasped. "And I shall order my men to slay you both without hesitation if you attempt to take Moloch's bride out of her cell."

He called a priest and gave harsh, quick orders. A horde of the priests, scowling fanatically at Blaine, surrounded him and Lanash and took them out of the shadowy hall into a neighboring corridor. They opened a barred door. Blaine and Lanash entered a dimly torchlit cell, and instantly the door outside was barred and they heard the armed priests station themselves around it.

SHARRA-EDITH rose from the bench upon which she had lain sobbing and flung herself into Blaine's arms.

"Ken!" she cried. "They mean to offer me—to Moloch—"

"Steady, Edith," he encouraged. "There's a chance we can get back—to our own bodies and time. Lanash is going to help us—"



Lanash had glanced out of the barred window, at the torchlit plaza of worshipers chanting to their towering idol.

"We must be quick!" she cried. "See, they take the first sacrifices forth now!"

Blaine glimpsed the little troop of white-robed children being marched out of the temple by priests, to solemn accompaniment of blaring horns and crashing cymbals.

"Sit here, and face me," Lanash was ordering the girl. "Look into my eyes—and do not resist when I thrust your mind forward across the abyss of time to your body that Sharra now inhabits."

Lanash' eyes became wide, dilated, the pupils expanding enormously. Sharra-Edith looked into them fearfully in the dim light and then her body grew slowly rigid as though gradually frozen by strange force.

Blaine watched, his heart pounding. He saw the face of the hypnotized girl—the exotically lovely face of Sharra—grow set and mask-like, the eyes empty.

"Go forth," Lanash was whispering, her terribly dilated pupils never wavering in their gaze on the other girl's eyes. "Forth from this body—into the gulfs—"

Blaine felt cold sweat on his brow. He knew that already Edith's mind had left this alien body and was hurtling through those roaring abysses outside time and space, seeking like a lost soul for its own body in future time.

Lanash' eyes did not waver, but her lips tightened as though in agony from concentration of mental force. He heard her almost inaudible, rasping whisper.

"She resists me—Sharra is aware of my purpose and resists—she will not leave her new body—"

From out in the torchlit plaza, suddenly silent except for the dull mutter of the distant Roman battering-rams, came the high, shrill cry of the high priest of Moloch.

"Moloch, accept our offerings and withdraw your anger from this city! Sweep away the attackers who menace us!"

Slowly, solemnly, rose the chant of the mighty crowd in fearful repetition:

"Moloch, accept our offerings!"

Blaine, looking in horror, saw that the brazen body of the gigantic idol was now glowing dull red from its interior fires. He saw the high priest step up the metal stair beside the idol and lay a tiny, bound, white-robed form within the enormous brazen arms.

There was a creaking of chains on pulleys as priests behind the idol pulled. In awful silence, the giant brazen arms slowly rose into the air. The bound child lying upon them uttered a whimpering cry as it rolled down the slanting arms, and then dropped through the square opening into the blazing fires inside the idol.

An awful puff of flame from the opening! And then a tremendous, half-terrified and half-exultant

shout from the crowd:

"Moloch, receive our sacrifice!"

Blaine turned, shuddering wildly, from that awful spectacle, as the arms were lowered and another child placed upon them.

Lanash' brow was damp, her eyes glaring and terrible as she gazed into the frozen, mindless face of Sharra.

And then abruptly the tension broke, and Lanash staggered weakly back.

"I cannot overcome Sharra's resistance!" she cried despairingly. "I sent this girl's mind forward, to that body of hers that Sharra holds, but I could not force Sharra out of it, for her knowledge of the ancient secret is as great as my own!"

From Sharra's lips came the desperate cry of Edith.

"Ken, I seemed near my own body, my own time—but I was thrust back here! We can't escape!"

## CHAPTER 6

### Across Time

FROM out in the plaza, the awful chant of the crowd came again to Blaine's ears:

"Receive our sacrifice, Moloch!"

He heard the pulleys and chains creaking, as still another of the doomed children out there was rolled to fiery death.

He strode to where Lanash sat shaking and sick, her eyes wild.

"Can't you try again?" he cried, but the woman shook her head.

"Sharra's powers are too strong for me—I cannot make her leave the girl's body."

"So she and Ethbaal will triumph over you, then, will live safe and happy in that future time while you perish here," Blaine taunted her fiercely.

Lanash sprang to her feet, tortured to the depths of her hate and jealousy by that thought.

"No!" she cried. "I'll not allow that! I'll—"

A swift flash crossed her eyes. "There is one chance!" she exclaimed suddenly to Blaine. "I cannot overcome Sharra's powers, cannot force this girl's mind to oust her from that new body of hers. But I can overcome my husband Ethbaal, who has no such powers as Sharra. I can send you back into your own body, that Ethbaal now holds."

"But it's not myself I'm thinking of!" Blaine cried. "It's this girl, who must die out there in Moloch's fires in a few minutes, unless we save her!"

"If you get back into your own body in that future age," Lanash cried to him, "you may be able to make Sharra give up this girl's body. It is our only chance!"

"Do it, Ken!" cried the girl. "Even if you fail to help me, you'll have escaped this hideous place yourself."

"I won't go and leave you here!" stormed Blaine. "In a few minutes they're going to take you out there and put you to death in that hideous way."



"You must do it, Ken!" she insisted. "It's the only chance left us."

Blaine saw the force of her reasoning. Torn as he was by awful fear for her, he yet realized that this thing Lanash proposed was the only method that offered even a possible chance of saving her from the ghastly doom close at hand.

"All right," he choked to Lanash. "Go ahead with me, but for God's sake be quick."

"Sit—look close into my eyes," panted Lanash. "Let your mind rush free—"

Blaine sat, clutching the edges of the bench convulsively with his hands, staring into the yellow-flecked eyes of Lanash in which tawny light seemed slowly spinning and whirling.

He could hear shouts from the plaza as the last few of the sacrificial children were given to fiery Moloch. He could hear in the intervals of their shouts, the distant rumble and mutter of the Romans battering at the walls.

Then all this seemed to recede, the cell seemed to fade away from around Blaine. His mind seemed to be in movement, a bodiless sensation of appalling rush through giddy spaces that roared and howled as though peopled by bellowing winds.

Through that monstrous abyss of raging force and light he seemed to rocket at speed unthinkable, a non-material being fleeing instantaneously through dimensionless gulfs outside all ordinary time and space. Gulfs penetrable only by pure and immaterial thought such as he now was!

He felt his wild rush through infinity slowing, he felt approach to dimly familiar surroundings. He could see nothing yet he could *sense* that he was now hovering near another living mind, Ethbaal's mind that tenanted an unseen body he knew was his own body.

"Forward—into your own body!" came the mental command of Lanash, beating strongly upon his being. "Forward—"

In the roaring gulfs, Blaine seemed struggling forward and then he heard a startled mental cry from Ethbaal: "Sharra! Help me! They seek to regain my body—"

Dreadful struggle of three minds, his own and Ethbaal's and Lanash', battling in non-material chaos of dimensionless abysses outside earth! Blaine could sense Lanash and Ethbaal at deadly grips, could feel Lanash thrusting him forward and pulling Ethbaal toward her—

There was a shock, a snap of forces, a rending, terrible sensation that shuddered violently through Blaine's immaterial intelligence. And then suddenly he could *feel* again, was aware that he was again physical, inhabiting a solid, material form—

HE opened his eyes. He lay in his own bedroom, Kenneth Blaine's own dark bedroom, in the villa! He leaped up, turning on the light beside his bed.

He was—Kenneth Blaine again! It was Blaine's

clean-cut, youthful face that looked out of the bureau mirror, and not the harsh bearded face of Ethbaal of Carthage.

"God—myself again—," he choked.

The door burst open. It was Edith who burst in—Edith's body, out of which Sharra's eyes looked in alarm.

"Ethbaal!" she cried. "I thought I heard you cry for help—"

Her lips froze. Her dark, widened eyes, staring into Blaine's face, suddenly narrowed.

"You are not Ethbaal," she whispered. "You—the man Blaine—back in your own body—"

"Lanash' work!" she cried ragingly, hell-fires surging into her eyes. "She tried to dispossess me of this form, and when she failed, she sent *you* back and drew Ethbaal back to his own body in Carthage! But I'll undo her jealous work—"

Her wide, flaring eyes fixed Blaine's. He felt the impact of hypnotic force from them.

But he plunged forward, before the hypnotic power of the woman could grip him. He clutched her silk-clad form from behind, stood grasping her with his hands closed around her throat.

"Give up Edith's body!" he exclaimed fiercely in her ear. "Go back to your own in Carthage, and let her come back to hers—or I'll kill you here and now! Your mind will die with this body if it dies—Lanash told me that."

"You daren't!" she choked, struggling wildly to escape his terrible grip. "You wouldn't do it—"

For answer, Blaine's hands squeezed tighter. He felt her body jerk and quiver wildly as his grip shut off her breath.

He knew that he was killing her—killing Edith Kerr. But it was not really Edith he was killing, but Sharra, devil's priestess in whose body back in Carthage, Edith awaited doom.

Then Blaine heard a choked, gurgling cry from the woman he held, with the last of her failing breath.

"Don't!" she exclaimed strangledly. "I—will go back—"

"Now!" he hissed.

He felt her slim body stiffen. And then, after a moment, she went limp in his arms. Her head lolled lifeless, there was no stir of any muscle.

Still Blaine held her by the throat, fearful of a trick. But still she hung lifeless in his arms.

Had he killed her? Had he slain Edith's body—separated himself forever from the real Edith?

Then, as despair clutched at Blaine's soul, he felt a weak movement of the figure in his arms. She stirred, raised her head feebly, spoke in a hoarse whisper.

"Ken!"

He spun her around. Her dazed eyes met him—no longer the darkened, passionate eyes of Sharra, but the clear, bewildered blue eyes of Edith herself.

"Edith!" he exclaimed. "It's you?"

"Ken! Ken!"

She sobbed, clinging close against him, her silken

shoulders shaking wildly. It was minutes before she quited.

"It was—horrible," she gasped. "Back there in the cell in Moloch's temple—when Lanash sent *you* forward, then Ethbaal, the real Ethbaal, came back into his own body, there in the cell with us.

"He was mad with rage! He struck down Lanash and then attacked me. The priests of Moloch were outside the door, coming to take me to the sacrifice. And suddenly—my mind went black—and after a moment it cleared again and I was here in my own body again."

She looked up, and he saw a haunting horror in her eyes.

"Ken, Sharra came back into my body, then—and was given to Moloch?"

Horror shook Blaine too, as he thought of that. And he knew that had Sharra been aware of what dreadful fate she was going back to, she would have let him kill her rather than go back.

"Yes, Sharra must have gone to Moloch as a sacrifice," he said hoarsely. "And the Romans broke into the city and put its people to the sword, history says. Two thousand years ago—but you and I know now how unreal time is, Edith."

An astonished voice spoke from the door of the little bedroom.

"Edith! What on earth are you and Ken up to?"

It was her father. There was troubled amazement on Doctor John Kerr's genial face, and astonishment too on the face of old Abel McPherson, who peered past his shoulder.

"What's wrong with you two?" Kerr asked anxiously. "You've both been queer, strange and changed the last day or so, as though you were a little crazy."

Blaine looked at Edith. And he drew her trembling figure closer into his arms.

"We'll explain it all to you later, sir," he said hoarsely. "You won't believe when we do, but we will. But right now, we're leaving here. I won't feel completely safe until we're a long way from this place."

"Leaving, just when we've found Moloch's temple?" John Kerr echoed. "Why, you *must* be crazy."

Blaine looked down through the open window at the starlit excavations yawning beside the peaceful sea.

"Edith and I," he said somberly, "have seen all of Moloch's temple we want to. And from now on, I'm giving up archaeology. From now on, I'm going to let the past stay buried—if it will."

## « RARE PINK ELEPHANTS »

Scientists do funny things sometimes. Or maybe it's only when they're investigating Demon Rum—scientifically, of course!

One of them recently set out to see what basis there could ever be in the insulting "he got drunk smelling the cork." The scientist proved it is possible.

He succeeded in getting a couple of friendly white rats to smell some alcohol. And had to drag them out by the tails—dead drunk!

Another intrepid investigator into strange byways made it his mission to interview victims of delirium tremens. He wanted to know what kind of animals they saw cavorting on the bed and leaping from ceiling to walls!

There were plenty of snakes and birds, lions and tigers, cats, rats and dogs. Also, one patient pleaded piteously with a Biblical-minded whale to spare him following Jonah, while another calmly argued a raging hippopotamus out of his dinner. But—

Only one drinker out of fifty-seven saw pink elephants!

What has become of the pink elephant? That is the burning question. Has his vogue passed? Was he just a fad? Will he return? Or has he been mysteriously banned from the jungles of our subconscious minds?

Surely science will not long leave this problem unsolved.

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John Kalen slept beneath the spray while beyond the cave, battle raged and the golden girl stood guard over him



# GOLDEN GIRL OF KALENDAR

By  
F. ORLIN TREMAINE

## CHAPTER I The Golden Girl

JOHN KALEN sat alone, slowly sipping his brandy. Once he looked around when he heard the word "Kalen" in a hoarse whisper. But it was not repeated. He shrugged and motioned to his waiter for another bottle.

The evening wore on. John sipped comfortably, kept aglow by alcohol fumes which affected him peculiarly in combination with the music. The feeling, that events impended, crawled through his brain persistently; he was here for some definite reason. What reason?

He sunk into a lethargic reverie, but was none the less conscious of his surroundings. Gradually he became aware that someone occupied the chair across

the table from him. Someone *different*—striking!

"John Kalen," the voice was low, soft, musical. The gears clicked in his brain. A tiny beam of recollection flashed, but faded before he caught its meaning. His eyes focused slowly on the golden girl across the table.

She *was* a golden girl. Her skin, though creamy white, seemed to shed a glowing, golden emanation, as if—or did he imagine it?—as if it were radio-active!

The whole room faded from his mind and he saw only the girl. Her slim, graceful body leaned forward slightly above the table. Her lips were parted just a bit. Her hair was spun gold, twined about her head like the halo of an exotic goddess. Her arms, resting lightly on the table-top, had been modeled by the master sculptor of all beauty.

"John Kalen," she said, "you are here at the appointed time. Everything is ready."

Kalen was more than sober now. His eyes searched hers closely but found no telltale signs of the adventuress. She was a mystery—and yet somehow she knew of him! Had he been drunk enough? No. There were no blank spaces of memory to be accounted for.

His mind raced. She knew something he did not know. He must learn what it was.

"Ready?" He asked, puzzled. The radio-active emanation from her skin bothered his eyes. He could not look steadily at her. It was like heat waves over a summer field; wavering all about her body. They hovered even outside the shimmering white silk of her shirtwaist.

**Who was this golden girl  
whose body glowed with radium,  
whose touch was certain death?**

When he glanced away from her, his eyes registered nothing. She had filled his entire conscious mind in an instant, and his eyes acted as if he had been staring at the sun. She had come—and eyes and thoughts had room for nothing else.

"I am *Jalu*," she said, smiling as if that explained everything.

"So?" John tried to lead her on. A little frown puckered her brow.

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# KALENDAR

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"So?" John tried to lead her on. A little frown puckered her brow.

"The boat is waiting," she continued after a moment's hesitation, "It is stocked and fueled. The crew is aboard. They expect you tonight. Have you the money?"

John Kalen's mind raced feverishly. Was he mistaken? Was this impression of her radio-active skin merely alcohol fumes in his brain?

"NO."

THE NEGATION impinged itself on his consciousness like a physical blow. The influence, which had guided him gently thus far, became a driving force, killing any doubt concerning her. That one word "NO" had seemed to come from within his brain—yet he could have sworn he heard it, too!

He heard his own voice, as if it were far in the distance, ask softly:

"What boat, Jalu?" As if the use of her strange name were habitual, and commonplace.

Her eyes widened incredulously.

"Why, the *Mary Ann*."

His father's auxiliary-motored schooner! The lawyers had mentioned it. He knew it existed. He heard Jalu's voice again.

"You have the money?"

Now if John Kalen hadn't been safely and suddenly a millionaire he wouldn't have been here. And if he hadn't been a millionaire he wouldn't have admitted having the money that was in his pocket. He wasn't a complete fool. He thought quickly of the risks involved, and again he heard his own voice answering, calmly, clearly—before he planned to speak:

"I have seven thousand dollars."

"That is right," Jalu answered matter-of-factly. "Then we are ready."

JOHN KALEN had been drunk for a week or it wouldn't have happened. If it had happened to anyone else, it wouldn't have mattered.

A certain combination opens a safe. By the same token it required an exact combination of characters, circumstances, and events to unlock one of the strangest mysteries ever overlooked by archeological-minded historians.

First of all, Kalen had to be a millionaire. He was. Second, if he had made the money himself he would have been off somewhere working to keep it. But he didn't make it. His father, Jacob Kalen—*Captain* Jacob Kalen—had willed it to him; in gold bars in the safe deposit vaults of a New York bank. John had converted the bars into cash within twenty-four hours after he received his legacy.

John Kalen had seen his father twice that he could remember. Both times they had visited for an hour at the military school where John had spent the six years between the ages of twelve and eighteen.

During his four years at college, John had received exactly three letters in lieu of calls!

Those three letters were three successive promises to reveal a strange and proud heritage upon John's

graduation from college.

Instead, three weeks before his final examinations, had come a cryptic note from the attorneys who sent his allowance and reported his escapades. It told of his father's death at sea, of the will which left everything to John Kalen, and of the necessity for him to obtain his degree, and then come direct to New York and call upon said attorneys.

Four weeks had passed since that date. All conditions had been fulfilled. John Kalen was on his own. He knew nothing about himself or his people. He had \$1,603,400.00 in the bank, and \$7,000.00 in his pocket!

A PROGRESSIVE attempt to drown his sense of futility, of fear, and a hint of sorrow, had started on upper Broadway with a group of boys from college.

But they had all left John after that first night, while he kept on drinking his way downtown. The second night he had gone his way alone. The fifth night found him along the waterfront.

He had been attracted to the docks as if drawn by a magnet. His feet had borne him straight (if a little unsteadily) to a certain dim entrance; down three steps, and across the room to a specific table. He moved like an automaton; as if habit had trained him to a definite path so that his senses functioned when his knowledge failed.

It was not of his own conscious choice or volition that he had sought out the one spot on the whole street which was frequented chiefly by Hindus, Egyptians, and Latins of the more mystic type, sailors who talked of history as well as grog.

The walls of the room were hung with smoke-begrimed oriental tapestries. Three barelegged musicians squatted on a tiny platform in one corner, coaxing weird music from some instruments made apparently from bamboo. Figures moved back and forth to the bar. Waiters, all of an oriental caste, slithered about among the tables, inconspicuously.

John was young. He had starved for adventure, dreamed of it. There had been strange stirrings in his blood through the long years of school. He had devoured astronomy, touring the universe in his mind. His space ships had been telescopes but they had built a craving. And here within his grasp was a *golden girl*, luring him aboard his own ship! Toward what adventures he could not guess.

She started to rise, but sat down again when he made no move.

"My clothes. My hotel. The lawyers." He spoke half to himself.

"Your clothes are aboard. Also your new outfits for shipboard and the tropics, also the *Drezza* wear. "Your hotel is paid. Your lawyers were informed."

He looked at her dazedly. "When?"

"Yesterday, John Kalen," she answered slowly.

"*Drezza* wear?" he repeated uncertainly.

"Of course! You will need it before we reach the end of the Moon Trail."

He leaned across the table toward her, but a startled look came into her eyes and she leaned back quickly.

"No! No!" she said, as sharply as her soft tones permitted. "Not yet! You must not come close. My touch would be death until after you have passed through the shower spray."

John looked unconvinced for an instant. But he had felt a strange, tingling sensation in his lower legs for some minutes, and they had been closest to her, under the table. Radio-active! She *was* radio-active!

"You're not—human, Jalu?" he asked hesitantly.

Jalu laughed, a tinkling laugh, like bells across the water. She was ethereal in her beauty, exquisite, more perfect than a woman had a right to be!

"Human? Yes, John, perhaps too human! I like you."

Jalu's head tilted back as she laughed again. John caught his breath at the maddening beauty of her skin, the curve of her neck and throat. His eyes feasted on her glory despite that wavering, golden emanation which surrounded her.

Her white silk waist was open in a V at her throat. As she leaned forward again, his eye caught a bit of color on her skin, revealed as her body turned slightly. He glanced away to ease his eyes, then back again. It was still there as she cupped her chin in her hands, smiling across at him.

"You," he said, nodding downward toward her breast, "are tattooed, Jalu?"

She glanced down, then up again, adjusting her waist, the twinkle in her eyes still alive.

"It's the token," she said, smiling again, as if that explained everything. "Shall we go now? You mustn't come within a yard of me. It isn't safe."

And John Kalen made the break as he had felt he would. The *influence*, though passive, still guided his thoughts. And he wanted adventure!

And the *Mary Ann* was his own property!

And Jalu was a very desirable mystery!

"All right," he said. "I'm ready."

## CHAPTER II

### The Good Ship "Mary Ann"

THE *Mary Ann* loomed, a gaunt skeleton in the darkness, before John Kalen's unaccustomed eyes. He could hear the suck and push of the swell as it lapped against the planking on the dock. The ship moved slightly, enough to make her seem alive. He could see stars winking through the rigging. There was no moon.

Only Jalu was clearly visible. The golden emanations of her body brought every curve and every feature into bold relief, like a human firefly. He could see that she was smiling at him—yet he knew *his* face must be only an indistinct blur in the shadows.

For just an instant he hesitated, was tempted to

bolt. Events were sweeping him out to sea. This strange, alluring golden girl was taking him into the unknown! He felt smothered. Then he laughed, uncertainly. The *Mary Ann* was his own property. The unknown world he feared was the world his father had known and loved.

"Shall we go aboard?" Jalu's voice almost caressed him with its soft magic.

"Of course." For the third time that evening he heard his own voice answer, as if he, himself, had nothing to do with the decision.

"Come then." Jalu emitted a low, birdlike, whistling note, and the schooner came suddenly to life.

Lights splashed long yellow fingers along the deck. Long beams shot out from unsuspected portholes. The sound of running feet sounded from every quarter of the boat. A section of rail swung back and a gangplank slid to the pier at John's feet. A light played down to show the way aboard.

Jalu, her halo faded now in the glare of light, nodded for John Kalen to lead the way.

On deck two men in officer's uniforms stood at salute. They stood straight and tall, with muscles bulging under trim uniforms, as if they were playing a part but must not be examined too closely. John was keenly conscious of the fact that their bodies shed that same radio-active emanation which had made Jalu seem other than human. His arm raised in salute; he didn't raise it, it raised! The men relaxed.

Jalu passed him quickly. She nodded her head to the officers as he said:

"Let me show you to your cabin, John Kalen."

And the pause between her enunciation of his first and last names sent a thrill of wonder chasing up and down his spine. That pause had made the word "Kalen" sound like a title, spoken reverently; more than that, as she spoke his last name it seemed to John that Jalu had bent her knees and bowed her head almost imperceptibly.

John was unconscious of his feet or his course as he followed his golden guide aft. Jalu stepped aside at the door of a roomy cabin, fitted in mahogany and gleaming brass. She bowed again.

"You will find everything in order, John Kalen," she said. "You are tired. Michael will attend you. Good-night."

The door closed behind him. John was alone. His eyes wanted to close. Like a runner exhausted after a long race, he sank into a chair. The reaction, after a week of sleepless roistering, the effect of watching a wavering golden halo for two hours, had been hypnotic. His eyelids drooped, his head sank forward. John Kalen slept.

The cabin door opened. A soft-footed Irishman, with eyes that twinkled like stars over Killarney, moved silently about arranging the bed, dimming the light, and finally holding a glass to the sleeper's lips. John drank it without even rousing enough to open his eyes.

JOHN KALEN awoke to the feel of motion. He lay wide-eyed, puzzling at his surroundings. Sunlight streamed into the room from a window above his bed. His eyes roved over the mahogany paneled walls, the gleaming yellow metal trim. His momentary panic vanished as he recalled the unbelievable events of the night before. He had come aboard his own ship voluntarily, had been shown to his cabin.

He did not remember coming to bed, yet here he was, in silk pajamas of a finer texture than any he had ever seen. His clothes were gone, but in their place a uniform, with captain's insignia, rested across a chair—the chair into which he had dropped to fall asleep!

From the slant of the sunlight across the cabin, John knew that it was early, yet he felt perfectly rested. His senses were keen. He wanted to jump up and examine this ship of his from stem to stern. But some tiny spark of wisdom bade him wait.

The roll of the ship told him he was on the open sea. He inhaled deep lungfuls of the salt air which whipped about the cabin. He heard the creak and strain of the rigging as it held in the fresh breeze. He could feel the ship driving through a rolling sea; could hear the lapping of the waves against her side. A surge of eager life came into his rested muscles, and he started to hum a tune in time with the vessel's roll.

The door opened silently and footsteps sounded in the room. The door clicked shut. His nostrils keened to the steaming aroma of hot food. He was hungry; desperately hungry! A voice which held some tiny vestige of a brogue made him turn his eyes at last.

"Your breakfast is ready, sir. Will you have it in bed?"

John's eyes were searching as he looked at the smiling, chubby Irishman beside him.

"You are Michael?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you can come near me without danger?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then let me have it, quick. I'm hungry, and I want to talk to you."

"Yes, sir." Michael arranged the pillows and set a little table on the bed so quickly that John knew he understood. And as fast as he ate, new dishes were set before him. Strawberries with cream, steaming oatmeal, bacon and eggs, toast and coffee.

The pangs of hunger effectively prevented speech until he had finished the last bite and lay back against the pillows, smiling.

"That was a breakfast fit for a king, Michael," John said, but his brow wrinkled at the startled expression on Michael's face.

The man gulped, reddened, then quickly cleared the dishes and table away.

"Yes, sir," he said at last, and then, "Do you wish to dress, sir?"

It suddenly occurred to John that fear had not entered his head since he wakened. There had been wonder. He had been curious at the ship's motion, but not dissatisfied. And yet—in calm retrospect—

this might be a very clever kidnapping!

With a quick motion he threw back the covers and swung his legs over the side of the bed. His feet landed on velvet slippers, and Michael was putting them on his feet all in an instant. His eyes noted a little heap of trinkets on the massive bureau; his wallet and the contents of his pockets.

John crossed the room, on legs not yet steadied to the sea, and counted the money. It was all there. Suddenly he began to hum again. He doffed his pajamas and donned the underwear and socks which waited on the chair. While Michael adjusted his garters he asked:

"Why the captain's uniform, Michael?" The question sounded reasonable enough to John, but Michael seemed to gather a different meaning than he intended.

"It's the highest rank at sea, sir. Aboard you are the captain."

"Hm-m-m-m," John puzzled over this; asked lightly, "And do I have Master's papers?"

Michael didn't see his smile, for it disappeared at the unexpected answer.

"Oh, yes sir, that is all attended to. Your papers are in order."

Thoughtful now, John donned the perfectly fitting, well-tailored uniform. He caught his reflection in the mirror and began to hum again. Life was good even if he didn't know what it was all about. It was making up in a rush for the long years of lonely boyhood—or was it? He stopped humming as doubt assailed him. The only thing he knew about the laws of the sea—was that the captain always sticks to his ship. He hoped the mate was a good sailor. He hoped—Then he grinned and started to hum again. He cut a trim figure in his blues. The cap rested jauntily above his chestnut hair. His shoulders squared.

"Shall we go on deck, Michael?"

"Whenever you're ready, sir."

"By the way, Michael, what time is it? How long have we been at sea?"

"It's eight o'clock, sir, land time. We lifted anchor as soon as you were asleep. We've been at sea about thirty hours. And now, sir, if you're ready, the crew has been standing for review since six-thirty."

John Kalen's jaw dropped. Thirty hours at sea! He'd slept the clock around and more! Review! He was in a daze, but he laughed. If this was a joke he could carry it off,—but it couldn't be a joke—it was his own ship! Michael opened the door and John stepped out into the wind-driven sunlight.

He was the captain of his father's—no, his *own* ship!

The crew had been lined up, waiting for nearly two hours, for him to pass by!

Michael had seemed to apologize, saying that the captain's rank was highest at sea!

Thirty hours out of New York! Had they given him a sleeping potion? And if so, how and when?

Walking slowly, conscious of Michael at his elbow, John paced along the deck, eyeing the men keenly.



Thirty-seven of them—a terrific number for a schooner! And every man-jack of them glowed with that same radio-active emanation which had surrounded Jalu! Where was Jalu? If he'd been tricked—

"Fine," he said to the mate as he reached the end of the long line, and then, because he felt as if that were inadequate, "What speed are we making?"

"Eleven knots, John Kalen," was the answer, "and thank you, sir."

### CHAPTER III

#### If You Value My Life!

SIX weeks out of New York, the *Mary Ann* still plowed ahead under fair winds. John Kalen rested beneath an awning on the afterdeck. He was hard, brown, and curiously happy. His fears of what lay ahead had long since died. There had been hours of walking, of handball with Michael, and later with Jalu.

During the first week he had not glimpsed the golden girl although he had watched for her everywhere. He had been forced to eat alone. Otherwise every slightest request had been obeyed quickly and eagerly. He was still mystified and a little uncertain, but he thrilled to the feel of his own ship beneath his feet.

And Jalu was on his mind. She had brought him aboard, then deserted him.

"Michael," he had said at last, "where is Jalu?"

"In her cabin, sir."

"I should like to see her."

"Yes, sir." Michael had sped away. Inside of two minutes he was back again, saying:

"The princess—"

But Jalu's voice had interrupted:

"You wished to see me, John Kalen?"

After that he had Jalu for company. And so, now, as he rested on the afterdeck, Jalu reclined opposite him. She had been companion, mentor and playfellow. He had questioned her as they walked side by side on their daily laps around the deck—always a yard apart—had questioned her while they played ping-pong; had watched her until her witchery almost drove him mad.

And she had evaded his questions neatly, parried them adroitly, squirmed out of his most purposeful inquiries courteously.

All John knew now, after six weeks at sea on his own ship, was that they were headed for the *Moon Trail*. And he hadn't the faintest idea where that was or where it led!

Today, he knew, the ship approached some obscure point on the coast of South America; that it was to be put in drydock for repairs that would take many months; and then was to be held until called for!

The semi-tropic sun threw hot, breathless air against the protective awning under which John Kalen

and Jalu lounged at ease.

"Jalu," he said, "tell me something, anything, about our destination. I came without question but—tell me."

And Jalu shook her golden head.

"I'm sorry, John Kalen," she almost whispered. "Your father forbade it. When we arrive you will know—everything."

JOHAN searched her eyes as best he could despite her glowing halo. Then he laughed.

"All right, then, tell me about yourself. Is that forbidden?"

"What is it you wish to know, John Kalen?"

"Your parents. Where are they?"

"You will meet them at the end of the *Moon Trail*."

"Has my father been there?"

"He—lived—there." She answered softly.

"And when will we arrive at the end of the *Moon Trail*?"

"In February."

"H-m-m-m. And this is August. Well—"

"It is a long, hard journey, John Kalen."

Johan grimaced. Adventure was coming, evidently. He turned sidewise, toward his companion.

"And you, Princess Jalu—"

Jalu gasped. Her hand flew to her breast.

"You—you know—?"

He noted the gesture of consternation and his eyes twinkled.

"Not much. When Michael first brought you on deck he called you princess before you interrupted him."

She looked relieved, but her face was deathly pale.

"Please, John Kalen, if my life is of any value to you at all, don't ever mention that you even heard that word. The secrecy is a sacred trust. Even the slightest breach would mean death."

Johan looked at her searchingly. She meant every word. He stirred uneasily. "What kind of a mess am I in on my own ship?" he asked as much of himself as of her.

"No mess, John Kalen," she said quickly, "your life is your own, and," she added under her breath, "so many, many other lives!"

Johan frowned. Six weeks, and the mystery was becoming maddening. He commanded and they obeyed. They hinted at power which was his, yet he was still ignorant of his objective. It never occurred to him to make a test of the hinted power!

"Land Ho!" Like an echo of thought, the cry floated down from the masthead. Johan saw the mate come out on the bridge and raise a telescope.

"Where away?"

"Dead ahead."

With a start Johan realized for the first time that it was strange these radio-active creatures spoke English. He glanced at Jalu, but turned away silent. He'd figure these things out in his own way. A short nap would not be amiss, he thought, and with the

perverse lassitude of the tropics he closed his eyes.

John Kalen had been tempered to sundrenched steel. He had been put through a six weeks training period without realizing that the trip might have been made much faster. Jalu tiptoed from under the canopy and walked forward to meet the mate. For a moment the two stood close together.

"The Kalen?" the mate said, and she spoke over her shoulder.

"He sleeps."

"It is well." The officer nodded and once again focused his telescope. Jalu continued on toward her cabin.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Moon Trail

THERE had been a full month in port. The ship was in drydock. Supplies were purchased and John had paid the bill. Now for four and a half months they had trekked an armed caravan, on their leisurely way through deepening jungles on a blazed trail which could not from its appearance have been traveled within a year.

Several times there had been friendly talks with Indians. Once an escort of two hundred warriors had accompanied them for eighty miles through hostile country.

There had been hunts, for meat, with enough adventures on the side to fill a book. Three members of the party had been buried along the trail. One was gored to death by some strange horned beast (which had died even as it gored); another had keeled over with a poison dart sticking from his neck, not ten feet from John Kalen. The third had been snatched from the very water's edge by a crocodile, during a river crossing. And the crocodile had been floating on the surface, belly upward within a minute!

And after each accident, the guard closest to John had been doubled. He was forced to ride on a covered tractor in the hostile stretches, but since Jalu rode with him he made no protest. There were three tractors, hauling trailers loaded with supplies. These trailers were flatboats on wheels. At river crossings, the boats made three round trips each, one with the load of supplies, one with the tractor which hauled it, and the third with the animals and the rearguard.

On the fifteenth of January the company traversed a deep pass through the mountains, and came out on a sunny plain which stretched ahead for many miles. Camp was pitched, and Jalu approached timidly to where John stood glorying in the savage beauty of the country.

She stood silently until he turned.

"You here, Jalu?" he said. "Isn't it glorious?"

"We approach the *Moon Trail*, John Kalen," she said clearly, and curtsied as she spoke his name.

He stared. There was no question this time. It was done openly and frankly. His impression that

he had received furtive obeisances was confirmed.

"And—?" His brow was furrowed.

"It is time to don your Drezza wear," she seemed to hesitate at what she had to say, yet to feel impelled to say it, "You must be prepared for surprise and revelation. You must not show surprise or shock. We are approaching the shower spray. It is necessary for you to conform to the dress and custom. Please do not question." She curtsied again and turned away.

John reached out a hand as if to stop her, then turned back deliberately to gaze again at the savage landscape. His brain was racing. He was approaching a climax. There had been six months of glorious adventure and intriguing mystery. It must lead somewhere. He was nearing the solution of the mystery of his father, of himself. He felt it. And he had been warned not to show shock or surprise! His heart beat a little faster as he turned his steps back toward the circle of tents, five minutes later.

But when John stepped inside the circle his breath caught in his throat. His eyes widened. Over his tent hung a silken tapestry emblazoned with an ornate heraldry. A lion predominated on the shield, and underneath was the one word, "*Kalen*."

Not a man was in sight. There was no sound. He remembered Jalu's warning and walked slowly across the space between the tents. Long, slender shafts of golden light from the setting sun set up a gleaming latticework around the camp. Faroff sounded the call of some strange bird.

Michael was waiting for him, but a different Michael, dressed as an ancient might have been. Sandals with criss-crossed thongs reaching almost to his knees; a wide girdle of soft leather, bearing a knife and holster, about his waist. Around his shoulders was a strap harness from which was suspended a large leathern pouch which did not impede his movements, yet was easily reached with either hand. And on his chest, its color peeping through the open harness, was the coat of arms John had seen emblazoned on the tapestry above the tent.

John had paused involuntarily while he noted the change in Michael, but he remembered Jalu's warning in time to bite his tongue and enter without comment. Neither did he remark at the rich furs strewn on the earthen floor in place of the grass matting which had served for the last six months. His brain was too dazed at the implications of the change to do more than bite his tongue again.

"Ready, sire?" Even Michael's form of address to him was different.

"Ready, Michael." The words were an effort. And as John answered, Michael knelt and began to unlace his high shoes.

TEN minutes later John gazed at his reflection in the great mirror which had appeared at the back of the tent. His steel-blue eyes saw a strapping, bronzed, young savage. A finely wrought headdress

of woven gold rested on his chestnut hair like a crown. The soft leather girdle about his waist was overlaid with golden cloth. His ornate sandals, and the thongs which wrapped his lower legs gleamed like precious metal. From his shoulders hung a gossamer thin tunic, so finely woven it hung like a satin robe, and only its glint of yellow told that it, too, was made of fine golden threads.

Gathering his courage, John stepped to the entrance—then stopped, frozen in his tracks. Every man in the camp was on his knees, head bowed, arms crossed on his chest, in a long row which reached most of the distance across the clearing. And at the end of the line was Jalu! Every one of them was dressed like Michael, except that Jalu's harness covered her breasts. And every one including Jalu wore the coat-of-arms tattooed, as Michael wore it!

"Jalu!" The word exploded from John's lips like a command. The girl raised her head, smiled, rose to her feet and came forward, taking her place two paces to the right of John Kalen.

Her lips moved in a whisper.

"Careful, John Kalen. As you name them, so their rank shall be throughout your lifetime."

John whispered in turn.

"Must I name them all now?"

She shook her head slightly. "No, later will do."

John was silent for a moment, then: "Orkus," he said, and the mate of his ship rose, came forward and took his place at Kalen's left.

"Rise." This last word was a blind guess. He had named a commander, and by luck, a princess. The men rose.

"You may go," he said, and they turned away, smiling. Jalu and Orkus turned to him. Orkus spoke.

"They are pleased, my Kalen," he said, "and I thank you humbly for maintaining Jalu's rank, and my own."

The transformed caravan approached the tallest mountain. For two days the quality of exhilaration which filled the air had more than offset the increasing altitude. And the third night, Jalu curtsied and said:

"In another day we reach the shower-spray, John Kalen. There is danger, but we shall win through. If you permit I will stay close to you after we pass it."

John stiffened. His eyes flashed.

"Danger?" He said. "That word is magic. Of course you shall stay close to me, both after and *before* we reach the spray."

Orkus set a heavy guard around the camp. The tractors formed the points of a triangle about his tent, and machine guns appeared like magic mounted on the top of each tractor. Two men were on duty at each gun.

The tents formed a large circle with John's in the center.

"Michael," he said, noting the precautions, "tell Jalu she is to stay in my tent tonight."

John turned then and sought out Orkus who was

setting up brush barriers around the camp. Fires blazed brightly outside the barriers as the cooks struggled to prepare the evening meal before darkness made the fires too conspicuous.

"The party is over?" John asked gazing about. Orkus, startled, turned to him.

"The party is over, John Kalen," he said, saluting, "the renegades will fight to keep us out."

John did not question him. He simply wondered the more at what lay ahead.

"I am having Jalu stay in my tent tonight," John informed him. Orkus looked relieved.

"Thank you, John Kalen. We are thankful." It was a heartfelt tribute to royalty, and John knew that in that instant he had made a friend.

## CHAPTER V

### Into the Shower Spray

THE RATTLE of machine gun fire awoke John Kalen. Staccato sounds that pierced through into his conscious mind like needle pricks. He sat up, confused, and gazed about him in the pitch blackness of his tent.

As awareness returned he heard, over the rattle of gunfire, a soft voice calling his name.

"Kalen," it said, "John Kalen."

He shook his head to clear it. That sounded like Jalu. And then he remembered. There had been danger. She had stayed in his tent for safety.

"Yes?" He answered, suddenly wide awake and leaping to his feet.

"Stay down, John Kalen." Jalu said. "There is deadly danger."

But John Kalen was dashing out of his tent before the words had left her mouth. He was a striking figure as he stood watching the shadowy figures which struggled to cross the brush barriers around the camp. His passive role was ended.

"Break out the searchlights," he said tersely, "and fire the brush. Then aim to kill."

Orkus passed the order to the men without question and in an instant flaming firebrands sailed through the air and landed in the brush-heaps.

John saw one of his defenders come to move and snatched up the discarded rifle as the barriers burst into crackling flame. As the brush flared up the attackers were thrown into bold relief and he poured shot after shot at their weaving forms.

The rifle fire of the defenders became deadly even before the three great searchlights threw questing fingers of light across the sand. And all the time the three machine guns kept up their ceaseless chatter.

Within ten minutes the attacking figures melted away in the darkness. Standing beside Orkus, John inclined his head and heard the sound of panic-driven feet far-off and going farther and farther, across the plains.

"Orkus," John Kalen's voice was sharp, "prepare

to move under forced march. If a new attack is planned they will come here first."

"Yes, sire." Orkus saluted, and for the second time that night relayed John's orders without question. It seemed to Kalen that instantly tents began to drop.

"How many did we lose?" John asked softly.

"Seven, sire."

"I heard no opposing rifles."

"No, sire, poison darts."

John strode resolutely to the crackling brush, whose slowly dying flames cast eerie shadows. He gazed at the still forms outside the barriers. Dozens, yes scores of them! Too many to count. He felt a little sick at the thought of slaughter.

Bronzed, athletic figures they seemed, too. He stood, in an awful fascination at the sight. Then in a sudden flareup of the firelight he saw a face, and something like a childhood nightmare gripped him in talons of unconquerable fear. It was bestial, satanic! There was something hypnotic in the gaze of the wide, staring eyes. He dragged his own eyes away and looked at another face, and another. There was no difference. Every one of them held that same, bestial demonic expression. He closed his eyes and gargoyle features still leered at him, with evil-sated hypnotic power.

He stumbled back toward the camp, shuddering at what they had escaped. And with a mighty effort he drew himself together.

"The wounded, Orkus?" he asked, but his voice trembled as he spoke.

"There are no wounded, sire. All are untouched—or dead."

It was a simple statement. John's observations had confirmed it but his mind could not encompass the idea. It seemed reasonable for the defenders, facing poison darts, but—

"Out there?"

Orkus replied gravely, "Our bullets have been dipped in the poison, sire."

A wave of nausea swept over John Kalen at the answer. He turned away. Perhaps it was just as merciful—but something inside him squirmed. Adventure was assuming new and horrible form.

He watched the men moving about like fire demons, casting grotesque shadows. Even the tents and equipment assumed strange shapes and leering grins. Hobgoblins reached out talon hands, and gargoyle faces bobbed about him in the half-light of the sinking fires.

For one soul-paralyzing minute, John probed the depths of nightmare panic. His skin crawled in abject fear of the unknown. His eyes darted like those of a cornered, hunted thing. Unutterable horror was dragging him closer and closer to the brink of madness.

"John Kalen." Jalu's soft voice caressed him as it had caressed him six months before in a cafe on the New York waterfront. He had been spellbound then; now he wanted to cling to her and sob!

The staccato bursts of the motors announced that

the caravan was ready—but still he stood frozen by that nameless fear. He made a slight gesture toward the golden girl, but she shook her head.

"Not yet, John Kalen. If we march all night we'll reach the shower spray by noon. After that you can approach me normally. Now is the bad time. The breath of *Erzpa*\* is in the air."

John's eyes gazed at her unchanging. They were almost glassy from the torturing strain, but her voice continued, and he felt it and responded.

"The shower spray makes one immune, but until we reach it you must be strong, John Kalen. Michael we had to bind. He was burned by the contact with our bodies," Jalu's voice was soothing, melodious, hypnotic, "But you are strong."

A stray breeze stirred the air. John's eyes cleared slowly and the insane glare left them. For the first time since he had sat in that waterfront cafe he felt that tremendous unknown influence, forcing his thoughts, impinging itself on his mind.

His voice spoke to Jalu: "I am all right now."

And Jalu turned away to hide the tears that welled up in her eyes.

"Oh, I'm so glad for you, John—and for me," she said. But the last three words were to herself alone.

John's heart gave a great bound. He visioned an ecstasy which waited. He knew now why he had boarded the *Mary Ann*. Jalu, in her emotion, had forgotten to call him "Kalen"; had forgotten to curtsy!

THERE had been unrest among the animals. Three of the horses had been killed by poison darts during the attack. The eyes of those which still lived were rimmed in red, as if they too had suffered from the strange breath of the *Erzpa*.

The pack mules and burrows seemed not to have been affected.

John mounted his tractor and the caravan started instantly on its slow journey across the plains. Two long files of men, one on either side of the tractors, walked steadily, alertly, with rifles loaded and ready. The machine guns were still mounted in position to fire. But now as the company neared its goal, its number totaled only thirty including Jalu and John Kalen.

It was a huge, red desert sun that rose on the plodding column. The day grew hot and the air breathless, but they kept on. The smell of hot oil and rubber mingled with the fumes of the exhaust from the three

\**Erzpa* is the native name for a species of plant (*nicotine gentian*) which flourishes in a prescribed area of not more than 360 square miles of plain outside of Kalendar. Its so-called "breath" is a pollen so fine that it floats in the air with the slightest breeze.

Any person not immunized through the radio-active therapy of the shower spray, is allergic to this pernicious pellagra.

The pollen, inhaled, attacks the sinus sac in a violent manner leading to temporary insanity. Continued exposure brings about a permanent obsessive insanity; a form of dementia praecox which leads its victims to unite in seeking the destruction of any living man or woman not so afflicted.

The so-called "outer renegades" are comprised of men who have strayed inside the deadly area of the *Erzpa* pollinated air. There is little doubt that many of the missing exploration parties of the last five decades are among these insane.



motors. The sand scorched the feet of the marching men through their leather sandals.

Two cooks passed cubes of cheese and slices of bread to the passing men, and they ate, walking. Later they passed down the files with canteens of lukewarm water.

It was a cruel march, but John made no pretense of taking part in it. He rode; they walked. But he did not change his orders in the slightest degree, except to allow substitutions for the tractor drivers and machine gunners. And this was poor respite on the desertlike plain.

It was as if John Kalen had withdrawn and another rode in his place. His mind felt that impinging force of a great will which directed his brain, urging him to drive the men on.

Yet all through the heat of the morning hours the air grew more and more exhilarating. It was buoyant by the time they saw the sun reaching toward the meridian.

At eleven o'clock they could discern trees in the distance, at the base of what appeared to be unscalable mountains. The peaks which they had traversed on the journey had been hard and tall, but these were lost in clouds and John could not even guess their height.

Then it came! Plopping down out of the air, a bleached skull rolled almost under the wide tread of the tractor. John's eyes followed it. He shuddered. He saw the men dart quick, nervous glances toward the plain which lay behind them.

"What does it mean, Jalu?" John nodded indolently toward the gruesome messenger.

"Probably that the renegades are waiting, sire, at the spray. Surely, that there is danger greater than we counted, for they have learned—" Her voice trailed off into silence. She was pale.

In the long minutes of silence that followed there remained the snorting drone of the motors, the smell of sweating mules,—and heat, aching, torturing heat. The air was wavering like the emanations from Jalu's body. Perspiration oozed from every pore in John's ill-protected skin. His eyes were glazing over. Glistening bodies, marching! Glistening sand, blinding sun—heat! And he, John Kalen, had ordered it so!

He laughed, suddenly, a harsh, strident laugh that brought Jalu's fear-ridden eyes jerking to his. Her lips moved, but the words were soft.

"John," she whispered appealingly, "John Kalen."

Still he laughed, horribly. His eyes were dilated, wild with the savage wildness that knows no reason. Jalu bit her lip. Her hand reached out and touched his arm lightly. He jumped, but the wildness left his eyes after a moment and he stopped laughing.

"A burn," he said, slowly, wonderingly, gazing at the purpling spot on his arm "and from the looks of it, a radium burn!"

"I'm sorry, John Kalen," Jalu said softly, "you were giving way again to the breath. It was the only thing I could do. That skull,—"

thought and added instead, "We'll be at the spray soon, and we need your strength."

There was a quiet like the stillness of death when the caravan halted at noon in the shadow of the trees. The air was heavy. The trees were gigantic. A river pounded out and away through a rocky gorge beside them. Orkus darted about placing the tractors and the guns. Tired men threw new dirt on ancient breastworks which formed a broken quarter circle from cliff to gorge.

JOHN sat on a pile of canvas, indolently. His system reacted drowsily after the nervous siege of the Erzpa and its violent cure. His arm ached from the purple burn in the shape of Jalu's hand.

Another skull dropped almost at his feet. Jalu, standing a few feet away, paled and turned toward him.

"It is time, John Kalen. We are here before them and will be ready. You need long hours in the spray. Come."

She moved toward the roar of the waterfall and John slowly got to his feet and followed her. He moved in the same indolent manner in which he had watched the feverish activity in the new camp.

The water burst in a torrent from the mountain itself. And where it crashed down on the rocks a purple spray rose and spread, and seemed to hover in the air. Straight back behind the roaring falls, Jalu led him, to a stone chair. The moisture of the spray which filled the air was like rich wine. It tingled against his skin, and eased the pain in his arm. All the colors of the spectrum danced through a shaft of sunlight which pierced the foliage. The roar of the water was like a lullaby, and John Kalen was tired.

Beside the chair was a couch carved also from the living rock. And on the couch was a mattress of some material that seemed impervious to the water.

"Must I stay back here?" he asked, yawning, scarcely conscious of the fact that he was behind the waterfall.

"Yes, John Kalen. You must stay here until the flow ceases. You will know, for the silence will awaken you. Then you will see the steps. When you see them, you must dress and mount them at once."

"Dress?" John forced his drooping lids upward and looked at Jalu in surprise.

"Yes, sire." Jalu glanced away. "You must undress before you sleep. Thus only will you get the full benefit of the spray. We will defend the camp, and will follow you up the steps ten minutes after the flow ceases. You will have time, and your privacy will not be disturbed."

John frowned perplexedly, but drowsiness was getting the best of him. Only one other question forced its way through his lips.

"What of Michael? Doesn't he need it?"

Jalu glanced down, "I'm sorry, John. Michael succumbed to the breath. His burns were fatal. Please." Her voice was sharp, as if fear held her on the verge

of hysteria. "The spray will cure the burn on your arm. Sleep now." Then she was gone.

John, half asleep, and scarcely knowing what he did, undressed and stretched out on the stone couch. He slept instantly, but his sleep was peopled by strange dreams of warfare of medieval castles, of clanking shields, and gaudy tunics. But gradually in his sleep the struggle was replaced by a dream of peace and happiness, and plenty.

And while John Kalen slept his men continued to pile new earth on the breastworks of their fortress! They examined the machine guns; and set up three small trench mortars and loaded them with shrapnel ready for instant discharge. And as a last resort, Orkus mounted two flame-throwers, one at each end of the little entrenchment. It was evident that they expected battle, and did not intend to surrender! The preparations were completed and ready when a third bleached skull fell inside the quarter circle of defense!

## CHAPTER VI

### John Enters Kalendar

JOHN KALEN awoke from a peaceful sleep to find himself in a strange lull of absolute quiet. It was startling. In the midst of a jungle, lying naked on a stone bench with not so much as a birdsong to break the silence! And then he remembered. The falls! The rushing torrent of water had stopped its flow.

With a sudden surge of life he was on his feet, dressing. How much of his ten minutes had elapsed? He fumbled with the leather thongs on his leggingstraps and realized suddenly how he had come to depend on Michael. His hair was a riot from the curling qualities of the mist. But he was ready in a minute and turned to look at the source from which the flow of water had come.

There were the steps as Jalu had described them, cut in the bed of the stream and mounting into the great rocky tunnel which rose at a 45° angle from the opening in the rocky wall. A narrow cut led up to the base of the tunnel.

John strode to the narrow cut to find steps waiting there and mounted them without a backward look. He crossed to the center of the tunnel and started upward in a phosphorescent glow that lighted the interior like twilight. Fifty steps upward and he could still see clearly.

Then he heard it. The crackle of gunfire from the fortress he had left—and Jalu was there! He turned back, hesitated. If he went back he might delay them. They would not follow until he had a ten minute lead. And he knew by now that their lives would be forfeit if he were hurt. He might best protect them by continuing upward into the mystery which lay ahead and allowing them to retreat into the passage behind him.

Reluctantly John turned and faced upward again, mounting quickly, conscious of the fact that he was best protecting Jalu by leaving her in the face of

poison darts!

And suddenly John realized with a start that his body glowed with the strange emanation which had characterized Jalu as the golden girl. *He* was radioactive! He had known, in a detached, impersonal way, that that was the purpose for which he slept in the spray; but now that it had happened he was surprised and a little bit appalled.

Still he mounted. There were rises of a hundred feet or so, and then long level stretches of tunnel, then another rise with perfectly cut steps from side to side of the great tunnel.

He did not seem to feel fatigue, though his mind was a turmoil of conflicting thoughts as he felt that a half hour had passed and there was no indication of sound in the tunnel behind him. Two miles he estimated the distance through the radio-active passage—and then daylight ahead!

With a sigh of relief he mounted the last series of steps.

A chill of foreboding struck him as he noticed an increasing trickle of water when he was about fifty feet from the top. He started to run up the last long flight as the flow increased, and reached the opening to the outer air in time to jump aside as a vast wall of water filled the tunnel and roared its way down the trail from which he had just managed to emerge.

For a frozen instant he stood on the little stone platform to which he had scrambled to escape, and gazed in awe at the rushing torrent which spelled certain death to the band which followed him through the strange passageway to a stranger land. Then he turned slowly and gazed behind him, eyes blurred by the thought of those brave souls who had stayed behind. Not a living soul was near the mouth of the rushing stream, but canals stretched straight away in both directions close along the perpendicular rocky wall at his back—and that wall ran straight upward as high as his misted eyes could see!

His hand strayed upward to adjust his headdress over unruly locks, and stopped—he had forgotten to don either headdress or tunic, and stood attired only in his leather girdle and glistening sandals.

Then, again, John Kalen knew the meaning of fear.

## CHAPTER VII

### Outside the Wall

SUNLIGHT blinded John as he turned away from the sight of rushing water. His eyes had been shadowed too long in the eerie half-light of the tunnel. His brain was tortured by imageries of the death of Jalu and his party.

So he stood, like a statue, eyes blinking against the wicked glare of sunlight reflected from glazed rock walls, and the roar of the water effectively shut out all sound.

Perhaps a minute passed. Perhaps ten minutes. John never knew the meaning of time or motion dur-

ing that period of numb, silent agony. His first awareness was of strong hands gripping his arms and forcing them behind him.

Even then, he was too baffled to protest. He shook his head and blinked his eyes to clear them as he felt cold metal bracelets snapped about his wrists. He had a confused impression of men, bearing spears, who stood about him menacingly.

Then he was forced to walk a few steps and step onto a flat boat which had drawn close to his platform without him so much as suspecting its presence.

He had a confused impression of a short trip along the canal, and then of being forced out onto a dock where the shade of huge trees brought back his vision.

In utter silence a group of twelve men, obviously guards of some sort, surrounded him and forced him to walk along a flagstone pavement toward a towering mass of what appeared to be white marble.

Up long, twisting stairways he climbed, and into a room hung with rich velvet tapestries the beauty of which made him gasp despite his efforts to be calm and figure out this new turn of fate.

He was halted before a raised dais on which sat three gray-haired, bearded men who gazed at him with a penetration which made him squirm. He felt suddenly that same overwhelming force which had influenced his brain time and again since the first night back in a dim cafe on the New York waterfront.

The leader of his group of guards spoke briefly in a strange tongue, then pointed at John. The gray-haired patriarch in the middle seat listened attentively, then turned and spoke to John, who could only shake his head hopelessly. And again that strange power seemed to seep into his brain as if it would steal his very thoughts.

But now the influence wavered like radio waves in a storm. It was strong, then weak, then jerky, as if doubtful of direction.

The drone of the proceedings went on, in sibilant tones of a strange, musical tongue. Gray heads leaned close together in consultation, then turned back to renewed questioning of their prisoner.

Their agitation showed that they were faced with tragedy, yet it seemed impossible to explain. John only shook his head mutely. That strange force seemed to be questing, seeking to tell him something, but its directional antenna was out of order apparently.

He shrugged.

"It's no use, gentlemen," he said finally, "I can't understand you—nor you, me."

There was a flurry of commotion. One of the judges spoke sharply, and an attendant guard rushed to a side door, returning almost instantly, pushing ahead of him a recording phonograph.

The apparatus was placed before John, and through pantomime he understood that he was to speak his words onto the record. He drew a deep breath and plunged.

"I, John Kalen," he paused as a gasp went up from

the otherwise silent gathering, "have been subjected to outrageous indignity. I am unable to defend myself as I stand manacled, because I speak only the English tongue which I have used throughout my entire trip in conversing with the Princess Jalu, Orkus, and the ship's company. Whatever my fate, and I take it to be unpleasant, judging from my treatment, I leave this record in case any of my little company escapes the flooded tunnel. Thank you for the opportunity to record the fact that I have been here on trial."

He nodded to the judges, one of whom came down from the dais to speak a few words, quite evidently identifying his testimony. The record was completed, and the apparatus wheeled away.

Events transpired quickly after that. There was a brisk order and the cordon of guards formed around him. A blindfold was whipped about his eyes and he was led away, on stumbling, uncertain feet.

There was no time to regret the fact that he had ever started on this wildcat adventure. His racing brain was too busy with thoughts of the tragic death of Jalu, and of keeping track of the nature of the surface over which he was walking.

First he traversed smooth marble floors, then a flagstone walk, and then was once more forced aboard a boat which he believed to be a flatboat similar to the one on which he had been transported to the hall of justice. The boat began to move and John's thoughts turned to the chances of escape from his present predicament.

It was quite obvious that he could do nothing until the manacles were removed. A submissive attitude, then, would be necessary for the present—unless he were on his way to death. But that was a chance he'd have to take, and it didn't seem reasonable that such intelligent faces as those of his judges could be guilty of giving him a death sentence for standing on a rock, blinking at the sun.

One matter troubled him exceedingly. Several times during the proceedings, an attendant had pointed at his chest and shrugged. The significance of this action came to him as the flatboat moved slowly toward its destination. A heavy score against him appeared to be the absence of the token worn on the skin of every person he had seen in Kalendar, as well as on every member of his ships crew!

The sun was warm, and John's head ached. Fifteen minutes passed, twenty, twenty-five. It might have been more—or less—for he could not see. The boat grated against piles and he could hear the swish of ropes being tossed.

A babble of conversation sprang up about him for the first time. Feet scraped on the boards of the boat and of the adjoining pier if such it was. Strong hands seized his arms firmly, but not roughly, and helped him over the side. They steadied him on his feet, and helped him climb a flight of twenty-eight steps hewn in rough stone.

He was quickly forced to sit down in a basket to which ropes were attached. He could feel straps being

fastened to keep him from rising. The handcuffs were removed, and a piece of paper thrust into his hand.

Then he felt the basket bumping and sliding in a quick descent. With a sudden inspiration he tore the blind from his eyes. He was being lowered down the slightly sloping side of a high stone wall which extended as far as his eyes could see in an unbroken line! And below him was the water of a canal!

He heard the basket splash against the surface and tore frenziedly at the straps which held him in. They came loose quickly, and he plunged and swam to the farther bank, a distance of not more than thirty feet.

Dripping and disheartened, John Kalen drew himself ashore, still clutching that paper in his right hand—and expecting to feel the impact of a poisoned bullet in his naked back.

But no bullet came as he ran a zig-zag course across open meadows lush with coarse grasses, and dropped breathlessly to hide in their scant protection.

A minute passed, another, and another, with no sound except occasional snatches of laughter and conversation from the distant wall.

Lying on his back, still fearful of treachery, John

looked at the paper in his hand. It was comprised of short paragraphs in what appeared to be a dozen languages. His eyes ran slowly down the page, and he sat up with a jerk, forgetful of danger.

Toward the bottom of the sheet one of the paragraphs was in French! And one in Italian! And Spanish! And Portuguese! And the LAST which he had almost overlooked, was in English! It read: "*You, stranger, have been sentenced to exile without the wall, for life. We, of Kalendar\*, permit no intrusion. We brook no delay in the carrying out of a sentence, lest you introduce unknown disease. You may live if you hunt successfully, and make peace with the renegades.*"

John got to his feet slowly, and smiled. He bowed, mockingly, toward the city from which he had just been ushered.

"Well, John Kalen," he said aloud, bending his knees as he spoke, "the fun is over. You may live if you hunt successfully! And make peace with the renegades!"

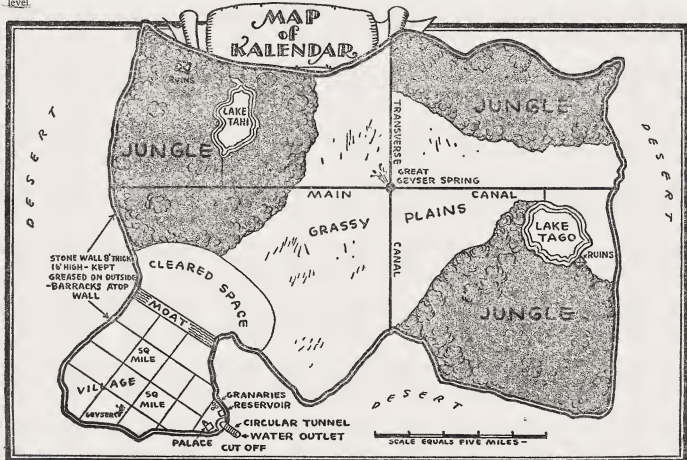
He shuddered as he thought of the maniacal faces outside the burning brush on a recent night. Then he fished inside his leathern girdle and breathed a

\* KALENDAR is a plateau valley in the Andes Mountains, in South America. It cannot be discovered from the air because dangerous air currents make airplane flight impossible at this point. The peaks and ranges which surround it run from 17,000 to 19,000 feet altitude.

Thirty miles to the South, aircraft can cross the Andes at 11,000 feet altitude. Twenty-two miles to the North there's a 13,000 foot level.

Therefore the existence of the country and of the valley has remained a secret to the outside world, except for its penetration by Captain Jacob Kalen (1869-1938) who managed to gain ingress in 1893 but who held his secret inviolate.

The valley level is 5,600 feet altitude. Surrounding walls are smooth for 200 feet upward, then rise in jagged lines for 12,000 feet more. The sun only touches the valley 3 or 4 hours a day. But





prayer of thanks as he fished out his jack-knife!

Without further ado he moved toward the nearest bushes, and began testing, testing, testing, until he found one with the spring of a steel sinew. Then John Kalen sat down in the long grass and started to build himself bows and arrows until he perfected one bow which seemed strong and sure. He stripped a leather thong from one of his sandals, split it down the middle and strung his bow. The other strip he carefully re-attached to the footgear.

And suddenly the sun was gone.

THERE was no twilight such as we know in the temperate zones. It had been daylight. Now it was dark, with only a tiny strip of light hitting high on the precipitous wall which surrounded the valley. Another minute, and that, too was gone! Overhead John could distinguish stars, but the ground around him was too deep in shadow to permit him further wandering. He sat down again, and shivered as an evening chill settled over the meadows.

A noise of footsteps in the grass made John sit up and reach for his bow. His eyes opened automatically.

the peculiarly radio-active soil produces crops, and the reflected light of the sun is intensified and prolonged by the radium qualities of the smooth rock walls which provide a dim, twilight emanation even at midnight.

Kalendar is never dark. It gets deep dusk. But no black night.

Thus the growing season is FAST.

Snowfall in winter is sometimes very deep. Five to seven feet of snow is common. But there is no wind, and no drifting.

Fuel for heat, is wood from the forests, cut and hauled during the summer. Seasons are the reverse of what we in the north temperate zone experience. July and August are the worst months of winter. February is the hottest month of the year.

When the winter is severe (July and August) the farmers all live in OKKA except a skeleton force which remains on the farms to feed stock. In OKKA the snow is melted with live steam. The streets are kept open, and the canals free of ice.

The enclosed, organized nation of Kalendar contains about 18 square miles of extremely fertile land. The territory is intersected into square mile plots, by canals 12 feet wide and six feet deep. There are twelve farms on each normal sector. Three of the sectors contain additional farms because of their slightly larger area. One sector is occupied by the city of OKKA with its homes, manufactories, parks and shops. And one sector is occupied by the King's Palace, granaries, government building, and the homes of the nobles.

The city of OKKA is the trading center. It maintains cobblers, weavers, tailors, boat-builders, carpenters, plumbers, bakers, butchers, grocers, and artisans in hereditary lines. A system exists whereby a boy showing aptitude for painting or sculpture, may be "traded" for the son of an artist who shows no such aptitude. He still lives with his own family. The "trade" merely concerns his occupation, and involves the transfer of the hereditary lines in one generation cycle.

The families of the soldiers also live in OKKA.

The city is sanitary, self-governed, efficient. The "Ogdon" (mayor) is a member of the Kalen's Council of Nobles, appointed by the Kalen every second winter. School is mandatory for all children between ages of six and sixteen years.

The total population of OKKA is 16,000 people, of whom 8,000 are of the "unmarried" generation. Each of the 160 farms has an average population of 5, the farmer, his wife, two children, and a man to help in the fields.

Thus the total population of organized Kalendar is about 17,000 people. It never falls below that figure—and hasn't exceeded 18,000

"What in—" The words were torn from his lips by surprise. It was NOT dark. The whole valley, the cliffs, emanated a soft, wavering light which enabled him to see clearly. His impression of darkness had been caused by the momentary contrast of shadow when the sun disappeared over the peaks!

There were footsteps again. Slowly he got to one knee, and waited.

Fear began to chase little chills up and down his spine.

What did this outer wilderness contain?

Another step in the dark—the sound of a heavy body brushing against the grass—the crack of a stick—the sound of a snort, which to his mind bespoke some gigantic beast—

And in an instant John Kalen was running, running as he had never run before, away from the wall, away from that questing beast, away from the forest.

He had covered a mile or more in mad flight when he saw a rabbit leap from a clump of bushes. His bow, with arrow affixed, was still in his hand. Without thinking he braced, drew back the thong, and let fly his first arrow, two yards wide of its mark!

John's eyes could not follow the arrow clearly in

in more than a century.

The renegade population of the outer valley has been estimated all the way from 3,000 to 10,000 people. Actually each estimate has been a blind guess.

The average farm production of the countryside is about 60,000 bushels of wheat; 30,000 bushels of corn; 30,000 bushels of oats; 30,000 bushels of rye; 30,000 bushels of beans. 2,000 acres are devoted to lush pasturage for cattle and sheep. Another 1,000 acres is devoted to gardens, truck, green corn, etc., which is abundant. Milk is supplied to the entire population through the small herds kept on each farm.

All deliveries are made by flatboat, through the canals.

Sugar is unknown in Kalendar (except that it is supplied to the Kalen's table from the outer world. Supplies being brought in by each rare expedition).

\* Twenty Noble Families, the heads of which comprise the Kalen's Council of Nobles, have beautiful mansions facing the canals and walls on both sides of the sector.

One of the twenty is named "Primate" and lives in a sumptuous palace to the left of the Kalen's own palace.

These nobles comprise the Kalen's escort on his hunting trip, etc. . . . except that the Kalen and Primate may never leave the sector at the same time as these two alone hold the secret of exit from the valley.\*

The sons of the nobles make up the Kalen's Guard. 20 young men.

There are 3 servants in the home of each noble; 10 in the palace of the Primate; 50 in the Kalen's Palace and Gardens; 30 servants are assigned to caring for the sector, keeping the canals clean, the grounds in order, repairing the Kalen's sporting goods.\*\*

Fifty clerks of various ranks, live and work in the government building—which is open at all times to all free citizens of Kalendar.\*\*\*

Athletic games are played by most of the populace, and there is an annual tournament, sort of a local "Olympic Games" on the tournament ground in the Kalen's Sector. This is the big annual event of the nation.

\*It is notable that a serious breach of the law had occurred when John Kalen arrived in Kalendar. The Primate had entrusted his secret to another and had gone hunting with the tragic results told in this history. It was fortunate for him that he was Jain's father. He speaks English and is a master of hypnosis.

\*\*The servants, 147 in number, are slaves captured as children from the renegade population of the outer valley. They are kindly treated and are happy because their lot as slaves in Kalendar is far better than that of the unfortunate renegade population.

\*\*\*The clerks are free subjects of the Kalen.

its flight, but the rabbit couldn't either. Suddenly, the little animal changed its course. It jumped six feet to the right—and the arrow transfixed its prey.

"Well, bunny," John said caressingly as he came up to the little bundle of fur, "methinks the Kalen's luck has taken a turn for the better. Now if I can conjure up a fire?"

## CHAPTER VIII

### Below the Shower Spray

ORKUS was inspecting the final preparations for defense when Jalu returned alone to the trenches. He went to her at once.

"The Kalen?"

"He's asleep," the girl said, coloring slightly, "I waited to make sure."

"Excellent, Princess. You must return and wait beside him."

Jalu shook her head violently.

"I—I can't, Orkus," she said. "It—I promised his privacy would not be disturbed."

Orkus bowed soberly.

"You gave your word. Then you must come into the dugout. The last skull that fell had a tiny silken parachute attached!"

"What?" Jalu paled. "Does that mean they have airplanes?"

"I can only guess, princess."

A dull explosion sounded, miles away. Orkus listened for a minute intently, then took Jalu's arm and rushed her into the dugout, a cave thirty feet underground.

"Their first shot fell short—and was a dud," he said crisply, "but it sounds as if they had also obtained a cannon. That may mean rifles, too."

"I pray they'll delay," Jalu answered.

"Your orders are to stay below for six hours, come what may," Orkus continued. "Then run for the tunnel whether we follow or not."

"I understand, commander," Jalu said, and smiled.

A loud explosion sounded not far from the trenches. There came the whistling sound of a flying projectile, and finally a muffled sound of concussion in the distance.

Orkus rushed out to the trenches.

"Not a shot. Not a sound until I give the word," he commanded. "I do not want to speak again until I issue the order to let go. But when I speak, they will be upon us. Every rifle shot must kill a renegade. Every second, the flame-throwers must each kill ten—and behind them the machine guns must mow down the distant ranks. Only thus can we throw fear into maniacs. That is all."

And not a sound came from the soldiers waiting at their posts; only the silent nodding of heads in approval of a plan which was sound, and had a chance to succeed.

Orkus sat down on a hummock of dirt below the

trench wall, his eyes glued to the glass of a periscope. Now and then his eyes wandered for a brief instant to his wrist watch, ticking away the minutes outside a leather wristband lined with lead.

An hour passed. Four more explosions sounded before the little fortress, each nearer than the last. But now a fifth sounded and it was no closer. Orkus smiled, and his smile passed from face to face along the line. The renegades had failed to find the range, or couldn't reach it from their gun position.

Five hours passed. Five and a half. Five and three-quarters. A smile settled over Orkus' face and he relaxed for just an instant.

Then it came. A horde of leering faces pouring up from the gullies, out from the woods—coming from everywhere, a hundred yards away.

Men gripped their rifles. The bolts clicked bullets into firing chambers. Their faces turned toward their leader whose eyes were riveted to the periscope.

The renegades were a hundred feet away—but still no word! Fifty feet! Orkus raised his hand.

Thirty feet! The hand came down. He shouted at the top of his lungs—and the inferno broke loose!

Long tongues of flame licked into the ranks with the first deadly volley of rifle fire. Machine guns, fanning through the flame, mowed swathes in the horde which followed.

The air was thick with flying darts. A man stiffened and fell flat within the trench. A sporadic burst of rifle fire from the distant trees added to the din.

Jalu, eyes glued to her watch, crept from the dugout and slid like a shadow toward the shower spray. Her face was as pale as death, yet she moved steadily through an atmosphere powdered with poison darts until she reached the stone bench under the spray.

The back of one hand flew to her mouth to still a cry of panic. A terrible fear gripped her—and she dared not tell lest the panic spread.

Something unspeakable had happened!

The Kalen! Here were his headdress, and his tunic. He—couldn't have gone without them—he MUST have been captured by the renegades!

Long minutes, while the fearful battle raged, she stood doubting what to do. Then hearing a lull in the battle—and knowing that if the Kalen were captured he'd be dead, she hid his garments underneath her breast-band, and waited silently.

THE lull came when the renegades retreated, and leaving the flame throwers turned on at full blast the little company retreated to the tunnel and prepared to mount the steps.

"Listen!" Orkus' voice brought every man to a stop. "Something is wrong. The flood is released and rushing down again. Back to the trenches every man of you and fight for your life. This time we battle the renegades to the death!"

Jalu gasped as her ear caught the sound of rushing water. She started after the soldiers but Orkus waved her back.

"Stay there, Princess. Watch! Watch the water! Watch for the Kalen! Be ready to let us know if it stops again. We have one chance in a thousand that it will."

By morning, when the sounds of battle died, the renegade horde of the outer plain was destroyed beyond all hope of rebuilding in force within one generation. A thousand corpses were sprawled across the area before the trench.

Within the trench, eleven men, including Orkus, watched the woods with red-rimmed, burning eyes looking for surviving attackers.

At last, without orders from his commander, one of the asbestos-suited operators of the flame-throwers climbed out of his stifling costume. The other saw—and did the same.

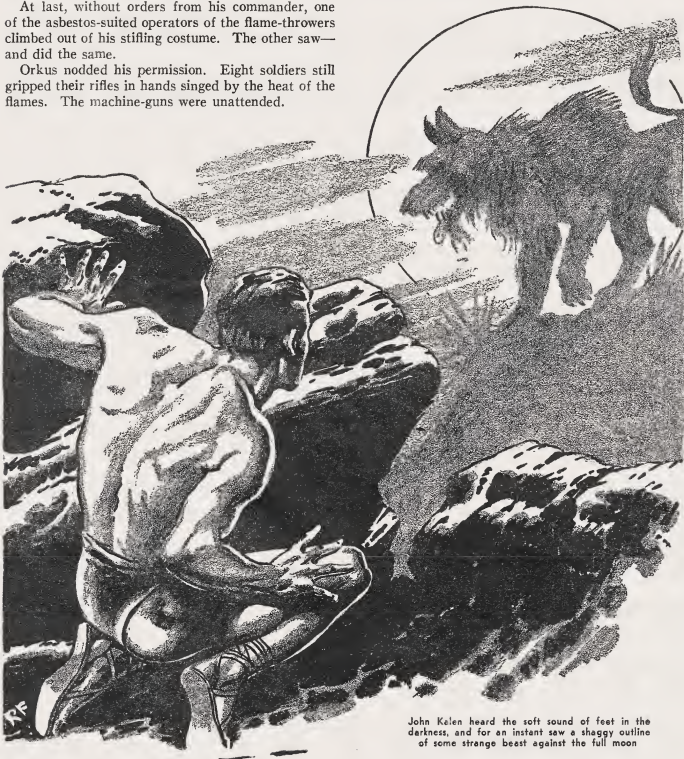
Orkus nodded his permission. Eight soldiers still gripped their rifles in hands singed by the heat of the flames. The machine-guns were unattended.

STILL the rushing cascade of water poured forth from the tunnel in a roaring message that all was not well in Kalendar. Each hour diminished the chances that it would stop to let them in. Ten days and the reservoirs could no longer admit of its being stopped!

It was nearly noon before Jalu's hail reached the smoke-grimed fighting men.

"Orkus. It's lessening. Come." She called loudly, slowly; and called again.

And eleven men backed cautiously through the



John Kalen heard the soft sound of feet in the darkness, and for an instant saw a shaggy outline of some strange beast against the full moon

woods; but this time the weapons were brought back and concealed in a niche beneath the shower spray.

The flow lessened to a trickle, and Jalu led the way with a heavy heart, up the steps, up the inclines, up more steps—knowing that every one brought her closer to a sentence of death for not returning safely with her Kalen. The first woman ever permitted to leave Kalendar—and she had failed!

Step by step the little band moved upward. Orkus, seeing Jalu falter, took her arm and steadied her.

"We did our best," he said softly in her ear. Twenty-nine have died. Perhaps it does not matter if we join them, Princess. The Kalen is not here to brighten life."

Tears burst from Jalu's tired eyes.

"Don't," she begged softly. "Don't say it. Not yet. Let them tell us that he did not come."

"As you will, Princess."

But it was a different Jalu who stood before the tribunal in the hall of justice thirty minutes later. A sharp-tongued tigress whose eyes shone like pinpoints of fury.

"Let me hear the record," she said crisply, "at once."

"Your manner," said the gray-haired patriarch in the center, "ill befits you, princess, when you speak to the council."

"GET THAT RECORD QUICK!" Jalu commanded, and the patriarch nodded to an attendant to bring it.

"Your punishment, if you forget respect again, will be severe and quick, princess. Discipline in Kalendar requires respect to rank. Have you forgotten?"

Orkus, head high, face burned from the hot breath of flame-throwers, turned toward the dais.

"If what we suspect be true, Kando, the Princess Jalu is the highest ranking person in Kalendar, for she was named by the Kalen. None of you has been. And I will fight for her station."

There was a deathly hush in the room, then, like an echo the voices of eight men spoke separately but firmly.

"And I."

"And I."

"And I."

"And I."

And as each man spoke he rose, and stood behind Orkus, his rifle at the ready. And no one of the palace guards made a move, for was not this the company chosen from all the land by the late Kalen, to go and bring back his son and heir?

Then like a voice from the dead, a voice spoke from a record, saying: "*I, John Kalen—*"

There was silence until it stopped—and for a moment after. Tears burst a second time from Jalu's eyes.

Her right hand darted forward to emphasize each accusation as she said to the three judges: "*You, and You, and You, in your inexcusable ignorance, have outlawed the Kalen of Kalendar.*"

"And in all the land there are only eleven men to whom he will listen. Eleven men," with a sweep of her arm she included the survivors of the journey, "and one woman."

Orkus leaned forward and whispered in her ear. Jalu looked startled, paled, but fairly shouted.

"Where is the Primate?"

"On a hunting trip," Kando answered softly.

"Despite the law," Jalu said aloud, "I may only hope the Kalen will be merciful." She paused in thought. "Orkus and I must lead the searching party," she mused. "It must be strong for we don't know where the search may lead. Our eight loyal men may go for they will recognize him though they don't speak his language. But first we need sleep."

"Tomorrow at this same hour we start with two hundred men armed with rifles. Tonight we shall rest in the Primate's Palace."

Kando made one last protest.

"You can't take these men there in your father's absence, Princess Jalu."

"You heard what Orkus said about my rank, Kando. I do not choose to take advantage of an accident. But until the Kalen is restored to us my wishes are law, and Orkus is second in all Kalendar in rank if he chooses to make use of his authority."

"And if we do not recognize that fact, princess?" Kando asked. And eight rifles clicked shells into their chambers as one.

"I think you have your answer, Kando," Jalu smiled. "We do not want a civil war in Kalendar. I am certain there would be more than this honored company in my support."

Kando wavered. He leaned his head toward the other judges in consultation. And while he did, heads moved together among the guards. There was a slight commotion of movement and the captain of the guards stepped forward toward Jalu.

Kando looked up expectantly.

But the captain bowed before Jalu.

"I offer you the sword, and the strength of the Kalen's guards, Princess Jalu." He offered his sword hilt first, and Jalu touched it in acknowledgment, and smiled and bowed. The captain stepped backward three steps before turning back to his men.

"Well, Kando?" Jalu asked, "Do you accept the facts?"

Kando bowed stiffly. "Pending the return of the Primate we have no choice," he said, ungraciously. "This is an unheard of situation."

"It is," Jalu agreed. "You have outlawed your Kalen. If I were in your shoes I'd be worrying about that."

## CHAPTER IX

### Among the Ruins

JOHN KALEN was hungry, with a savage hunger such as drives tigers to the kill. Three days had passed while he moved slowly but surely away from



the wall of Kalendar, deeper into the valley. There had been little sleep for him. Always, when he rested there came that sound of heavy feet through the grass, through the brush, through the forest—stalking, stalking. Never had this beast come in sight, yet never had it been out of hearing.

He had failed to produce fires on which to cook his rabbit, and this morning he had been forced to discard the carcass as unfit to eat. He had not yet come to the point where he could eat raw meat.

Up to now there had been no sign of human life in the wilderness, yet he hid at the slightest sound. But this morning he came face to face with a crumbling pile of ruins miles deep in a jungle of great trees and vines.

John stalked the pile of stone with the cunning of a panther. It stood deep in the woods—yet was large enough in extent to permit sunlight to penetrate through the trees. And, stalking deep in the shadow of the trees, John could make out a shadowy entrance at the top of a flight of grass-grown steps.

By noon, he had overcome fear sufficiently to mount the steps slowly, bow in hand. Like a white shadow, he slipped into the recess, through the door, into a white-walled chamber forty feet square. Its ceiling was supported by marble pillars and arches. It was sound and tight, the marble floor littered with dust; yet obviously not too long unvisited.

He crept from pillar to pillar, exploring, until he reached the farthest wall. Through another doorway he crept, to a second chamber like an anteroom twenty feet square. This too, was weather tight and held no other door. But John was startled into sudden fear again at the sight of light against the wall under a square opening in the ceiling.

The sun crept in through a series of little windows set high in the wall. It laid a streak of warmth along one wall, and in this sunlight John Kalen lay down—and slept.

Dreams troubled the sleeper. In his tired, hunger-weakened state, sleep pictured his fears. Footsteps, following him, following, coming closer. Ravening eyes glaring at him. In a sudden chill of fear he sat up, cringing back against the wall as the beast leapt at him in his dream. His eyes opened, and before him stood a man, naked except for a loin-cloth, skin tanned like a savage, but obviously white, and clear, laughing, blue eyes. A young man, and beside him a beast as big as a bison but looking like a water buffalo. A rope attached to a ring in the beast's nose, hung over the man's arm, and a blanket was strapped on the great round back like a saddle.

This much John saw before he moved. But at his first motion the stranger drew John's own bow to the full with an arrow pointed at his stomach.

"Agrata?" the man asked in a guttural word or phrase. John was scared, but he was tired, and hungry—and ready to quit.

"Not so you can notice it," he answered weakly.

There was an answering grin and the savage pointed

with the arrow at a piece of paper under John's harness. John fished it out (he'd kept the warrant of his exile), and pointed to the paragraph in English. The stranger's eyes laughed. He in turn pointed with the arrow at the paragraph at the top of the list.

John sprang. One hand reached the arrow and tore it free, the other managed a half-Nelson and held for about ten seconds. The savage flicked the rope from his arm, laid the bow down deliberately, and tossed John Kalen over his head like a bean-bag.

"Kargota pani," he said, bracing himself. "Gluk inor wandito."

But John lay still where he had fallen, blood oozing from a cut in his scalp. And after a moment the stranger stripped a leather strap from his blanket-saddle and bound John's hands securely behind his back. Then, lifting the inert figure atop his beast he secured the feet beneath its belly, and led it slowly out of the room, down the steps and deep into the jungle.

Twice, he heard the sound of voices in the distance, and the sound of tramping feet. Both times, man and beast came to a deathlike pose with their unconscious captive. Then when the sounds died away, the slow journey went on, plodding, plodding through trails only jungle-trained eyes could distinguish.

John was conscious of motion, a jarring, jogging motion, and darkness. He began to hear sounds, cracking twigs, heavy breathing. He smelled strange odors, like sweating bodies. His eyes opened and stared upward, at a latticework of leaves, and branches, with now and then a tiny patch of sun. Then his head turned, and he saw his late adversary—but the sight was like a nightmare for only the upper half of the man's body was visible, and it moved up and down like a jack-in-the-box.

In a cold sweat, John sat up astride the beast, and comprehension flooded over him to mingle with fear.

"Where are you taking me?" he demanded hoarsely, straining at his bonds.

"Etka loos," the savage told him softly, placing a finger to his lips. "Daka."

And with that John Kalen had to be content.

At dusk they approached a great Geyser that spouted fully fifty feet in the air, and the savage grinned as John exclaimed in wonder.

"Glorious," he said, forgetting for the instant, his situation.

"Glooreous," the stranger agreed, and nodded in agreement.

John looked startled as an idea sprang into being. Perhaps? He shrugged his shoulders and looked down at himself when he caught his captor's eye.

"John K—" he said. A lightning-like warning told him not to say "Kalen."

The captor looked puzzled. He repeated the gesture and the word: "John."

ONCE more a light dawned on the stranger's countenance. He pointed to himself and said "Dewar."

Then he pointed to his prisoner and said: "Jon." Then to the beast and said: "Kai." Then the two men grinned at each other.

Close by the Geyser flowed a broad, deep canal. It must have been fifty feet across. John could only guess at its depth, but it looked to be ten feet or more. The sides were smooth as the cliff walls around the valley, a reddish marble or granite.

Dewar led the beast along the canal for fifty feet or so, to where a crude raft made of six logs, lashed together with vines, was staked. He untied John's feet and helped him dismount. He led the "Kai" onto the raft, in the center, where the beast balanced a moment, then obediently lay down. He motioned John aboard, but John made motions to show that he wanted his hands free.

Dewar looked puzzled, and troubled. He finally compromised by untying the bond and replacing it with John's hands in front, instead of behind his back. And the strength of the savage accomplished the feat as easily as if he had been handling a baby.

Five minutes later the craft moved forward along the canal spreading little ripples across the glassy surface. John was seated forward, crosslegged. The Kai lay like a statue in the middle, and Dewar poled the craft along with a skill which proved him a seasoned raftsman.

Eight miles the craft moved before the poleman paused. It made the five miles to the far side of the valley in half the light of the night. Then it turned onto a new canal which flowed along the cliff wall, farther and farther from Kalender.

The pangs of hunger gnawed and tortured John Kalen as he floated slowly on his journey. His back was toward Dewar, and he worked continuously to loosen the thongs at his wrists.

When John leapt to help tie the raft ashore at the spot Dewar chose to camp, the man grinned. He made no further attempt to tie his captive. The savage proceeded into the woods obviously after game, but John noted that he ignored his bow and arrows, and gripped a weapon similar to an Indian Tomahawk.

Putting an arrow to his bow, John strode beside Dewar, despite the latter's violent pantomime objecting to the use of the weapon.

Two hours later a small deer fell victim to an arrow. Dewar was outraged. He refused to help carry the animal to camp—so John managed alone. The savage had built a fire by some method known only to him. John proceeded to cut a choice piece of meat and roast it.

Dewar watched him hopelessly, watched him taste the roast and smack his lips, watched him eat—and then waited for him to die. But John didn't die! His strength began to return. He beamed on his captor and motioned to the meat. Dewar shook his head again—though less positively.

Finally light dawned.

"Look, you ignorant savage," John yelled, and Dewar grinned.

"See my arrows?" John continued, pointing at the undipped tips. "Now look at yours." He pointed again at the poisoned tips, made motions and went through the agonies of death.

"Now watch." He thrust the point of his own arrow into his arm until it drew blood and laughed at his companion.

Dewar's face was a cloud, then it cleared and he laughed, and leaped into the air with a shriek that sounded for all the world like "Eureka."

John did not have to be told he had made a friend. Dewar's actions in the next half hour proved it. The man cut a steak from the deer, and another. He roasted one for himself and the second for John.

Together they sat before the fire, juice dripping from their jaws while they ate.

## CHAPTER X

### Tago City

EARLY morning saw the two men poling the raft along the canal. All day they moved slowly, majestically, under the overhanging bows of great trees. Some of the foliage was familiar. Occasional oaks which must have been growing for two hundred years; festoons of Spanish moss which hung strangely from the boughs of giant evergreens.

But John's hunger had not been completely appeased by two meals and his eyes kept straying to the smooth surface of the stream. A vague wonder grew as to the fact that not once during the weeks at sea had he seen a man try to fish!

Could it be that the flow of water from the valley eliminated all aquatic life? Or that fish could not live in the irradiated waters? That seemed doubtful; humans lived their lives in the valley, and foliage flourished.

Once the craft was safely underway it seemed to move with a slow current. Dewar guided it easily, so John laid his pole along the logs and began unraveling a thread from his clothes. It wasn't easy, but in an hour's time he had woven a stout cord nearly eight feet long, and had cut an overhanging branch and whittled it down to the proportions of a willow pole.

Dewar watched, fascinated. John searched unsuccessfully for a pin, then whittled a slender sliver of the wood into a crude replica of a barbed hook. Slicing a tiny piece of meat from the slabs they had saved from the deer, he attached it and tossed the line into the stream.

Almost at once there came a tug and John maneuvered the line in close to the raft and jerked it aboard with a ten inch fish which looked exactly like a northern black-bass.

Once more he tried, and this time the fish was even bigger. It put up a battle that strained his improvised line to the utmost, and just as he flipped it from the water it broke away. Dewar laughed delightedly, but John whittled out another hook and

tried again. The result was another fish, twelve inches long.

He proceeded to clean and scale them ready for cooking, and as the sun was high, motioned to Dewar that he'd like to go ashore and eat. His captor made no protest but watched for a clearing and poled the raft to the bank. The savage kindled a fire and watched while John impaled the fish on sticks and thrust them into the flame.

It was a delightful change of menu even without salt. John enjoyed every mouthful, then looked up to find that Dewar hadn't as yet touched his, but sat with his eyes glued to his companion's face.

John laughed and made as if to grab his captor's fish, but the savage came suddenly to life and nibbled gingerly at the broiled fish. A change of expression came over his face and he ate voraciously. When it was gone he rose, crossed to John's side and patted his companion's shoulder three times, very solemnly.

THE second night before dark, the raft approached a wide expanse of water and moved confidently out onto what appeared to be a lake perhaps three miles across. John's eyes were searching anxiously for signs of their destination when he saw white stone ruins on the shore; buildings which would have done credit to the Mayans. The raft approached an inlet between two of the piles of stone just as the sudden night settled over the weird valley.

He helped Dewar secure the raft to some pilings, and waited until the Kai debarked onto the stone pier. Then he followed and Dewar motioned him through a shadowy doorway. The passageway was dark, and the hair rose on his head as he heard the flutter of numerous wings, as if the place were alive with bats. Strange sounds issued from crevices, like human moans far in the distance. But John stumbled along through the dark behind his captor.

They had gone perhaps a hundred feet, and turned two corners when Dewar stopped, opened a door and pushed John gently. John took the hint and walked ahead confidently. Not until he heard the door slam shut behind him, and the bar slide into place did he again feel the fear of betrayal. Not a sound came from beyond the door. Perhaps the walls were too thick.

"Dewar!" he called, and listened, but heard only the fluttering of wings.

"DEWAR" he yelled, louder than before, but the fluttering of wings only increased, and the echoes of his own voice answered him.

"Why, you sneaky Kai herder," he exploded, "I've a good notion to rip you apart and throw you in the canal!" Then he laughed at himself, but stopped suddenly, his heart in his throat. He would have sworn that he heard a movement in the darkness! Movement, and a spoken word.

He pressed his body flat against the cold stone wall and held his breath. Nothing! He was losing his mind perhaps, but he stood still, and after a long

time he heard a movement again, like the rattle of a chain, and a voice, rasping and hoarse, said:

"English. I could have sworn I heard English!" "Eureka!" John jumped a foot in the air. "Whoever you are and wherever you are, speak to me. You *did* hear English—and you're the first person I've found in this whole benighted valley that I could talk to!"

"Bats," the voice said. "It must be the bats."

"Bats my eye!" John felt his way across the floor toward the voice. "Where are you? For Pete's sake, answer me. Speak to me directly. Prove I'm not bats myself."

And suddenly that tremendous impelling force he had experienced before, probed John's brain until his head ached. He could feel it tearing his thoughts apart and tracing them. Then it was gone, as if it had been switched away to some other part of the world, and there was a long period of silence.

Finally however, that strange figure against the far wall stirred again. He could hear the clearing of a throat, and then a soft voice, fearful, yet proud, spoke directly to John.

"First I will set your fear at rest as well as I can. Jalu is not, I feel sure, dead. Second, I crave your mercy, my Kalen, for breaking the unwritten law by leaving Kalendar in your absence. To think that you would find me here is degradation indeed. To find me in chains, is worse humiliation. Beyond that I perceive that you are free, though confined in this room. Were you counted a prisoner, you too would be shackled to this wall.

"I have learned much these last two weeks. While there is some insanity in Tago, the majority of these people are capable of social organization.

"We might never feel free to eliminate our military, but we might well establish trade with these unfortunates. Our nets prevent our obtaining aquatic foods except on our sporting expeditions. Yet the canals abound with such foods in the outer valley, thanks to your father's wise foresight. We could trade for this food to our national advantage.

"I am saying all these things before you approach, knowing that my life is rightfully forfeit, and feeling it my duty to first present this information."

"Well," John said softly, and again, "Well! I have to be held in chains in Kalendar, banished into the jungle with an admonition to hunt if I want to live, be captured by a savage, make friends with him, get locked up in a marble ruin with some bats in the order to find someone who recognizes me as the Kalen of Kalendar—and who speaks English.

"Who are you?"

"I was," the voice answered proudly, "The *Primate* of Kalendar. My daughter, Jalu, headed the expedition to bring you to the throne. Who I am, I do not know. That is in your hands, my Kalen."

JOHN heard the rattle of the shackle chains, and he knew as well as if it had been broad daylight,

that an old man had stood in proud humility and bent his knee as he answered and spoke the title of his sovereign. The situation had its humorous angles.

"Well," John said again, "Let's see. I should have you killed for breaking the law, but if I do I can't very well ask you for Jalu's hand, now, can I? On the other hand I suspect you of being enough of an old schemer to know I was bound to fall in love with an exquisitely beautiful girl if you sent her after me—"

There was a gasp, almost of dismay from the darkness.

"I crave pardon, sire. Jalu was your father's choice, not mine. The orders are over his hand and seal."

"He would!" John was smiling to himself. "On the other hand we're both locked up in the renegade headquarters and if they ever guess who I am I don't think much else is going to matter."

"Come close, my Kalen," the voice answered. "I have schemed a scheme for escape, and perhaps—"

"Perhaps," John broke in. "On the other hand, I've a good notion to teach these people to shoot and go back and conquer Kalendar. After the way I've been treated I think that might be a good idea. And then again we may both be bumped off in the morning. Are there any blankets in here? I need some sleep—and I imagine you do too."

Fortunately for his peace of mind, John did not see the shadowy figure, with one ear glued to the outer side of the wall against the tiny peep hole, nor did he hear the stealthy footsteps as the figure moved silently down the passageway.

He found a bunk against the wall, with some crude covers on it, and crawled in between them. After twenty minutes of restless tossing he discovered the reason and rose again. Without a word he slapped his clothing all over, deserted the bunk and curled up against the wall and went to sleep on the floor. It wasn't cold enough to make him sleep with an army of vermin if he could help it!

## CHAPTER XI

### John Joins the Renegades

SOMETHING woke John Kalen with a start. He sat up, and his eyes darted quickly around the room to settle on a kindly faced old man with a white patriarchal beard, gazing at him. John smiled and the primate smiled in turn. The man wasn't so old either, John mused. If it weren't for the beard—?

"How old are you?" The question just popped out.

"Fifty-nine, my Kalen," the man answered.

"And what's your name?"

"Gared Dulon." The same humility was in the voice, the same half-fear; half-hope.

John noted the antiquated iron rings around Dulon's ankles, the heavy linked chain which held him within three short feet of the wall.

"I'm afraid, Dulon, that they don't quite trust you," he said nodding toward the chains.

The primate smiled again, and shrugged. "I can hypnotize my guard and make him release me if ever he has the keys with him," he answered calmly, "so I've been patient these ten days."

John's eyebrows raised quizzically.

"That being the case, why couldn't you hypnotize your Kalen into sparing your life?"

The old man looked startled and hurt. He shook his head violently in the negative.

"It is against the law," he said simply, as if that settled the matter for all time.

And John, not doubting the sincerity of his reaction, felt that he could come to like the people of his kingdom a great deal if ever he got to be well-acquainted with them under normal circumstances.

The bar on the door rasped, and the door swung in slowly. Dewar's face appeared, then another and another until seven men stood in a little group inside the door.

John bowed ceremoniously. "Welcome," he greeted, with a sweeping gesture. But Dewar's face was grave. The savage turned toward the older prisoner and spoke a swift chain of unintelligible syllables. Dulon's head nodded almost continuously. When Dewar paused, the primate turned to John.

"I am requested to interpret to you as follows: 'The wall people come forth with an army and break the unwritten law by approaching the Tago country beyond the center canal. You were heard to remark that you might teach these people to shoot and join them against Kalendar. They wish to know if it is true.'"

"They trust you to ask me correctly?" John's face showed his surprise. The older man drew himself up proudly.

"The nobles of Kalendar do not prevaricate," he said, with the same simplicity he used in his remark anent the law.

"And Kalendar is breaking an unwritten law?" John asked.

"Yes," the primate answered softly. "They have no doubt learned that you are captive."

"So?" John paced back and forth twice. "Tell Dewar that I will join them, teach them to shoot, and defend their land on one condition. They must not use poison on their arrows. They must use them as he and I used ours on the deer."

Gared Dulon paled. He appeared stricken, yet he bowed and turned obediently. There appeared to be an angry controversy among the visitors at his words, but Dewar was gesturing, stamping, pleading, and after five minutes the turmoil quieted. Dewar spoke again to Dulon.

"He asks," Dulon repeated, "if that is a condition which brings victory?"

"Tell him it is in this case."

Dulon nodded, and turned to repeat the message, but John added impulsively, "Tell him also that you



must be set free to carry a message to Kalendar."

Five minutes later, John went arm-in-arm with Dewar through the damp corridors. They were followed by the primate who was to be freed as soon as all verbal orders had been given.

It became clear that John was suddenly become a field marshal, and that his chief of staff was his savage captor of the last few days.

It was a motley crew that awaited their commanders at the fringe of the forest. Hundreds of men, some of whom showed the signs of incipient insanity, but the major portion of whom showed in their features only the pinch of irregular want, and a certain settled bitterness.

With a feeling of exhilaration mixed with doubt, John gave his orders and the men set to work making bows and arrows. They were plentifully supplied with rawhide thongs and in two hours the force was armed.

ORDERS deploying the force, and setting two hundred men as a mobile reserve in the rear, were passed through the reluctant lips of Gared Dulon. The army deployed forward keeping low in the waist-high grasses of the meadowland.

Four miles straight ahead they moved, from the edge of the Tago forest to within one mile of the canal, before word was passed back that the Kalendrian soldiers were ahead.

"Tell them," John passed his last order, "to shoot to STOP the enemy. NOT to kill the wounded, and to stop shooting as soon as the Kalendrians retreat beyond the canal; that it is time to set you free to start your journey as that, too, is part of the plan for victory."

He listened as the pale, drawn primate issued the orders to Dewar, watched as they knocked his shackles from his wrists and motioned him to go straight to the wall and follow the canal to the walled country, and watched the old man depart with never a backward glance.

Then shouts and fighting ahead drew his attention. For the fight was joined quickly and hard. Men milled back and forth, while he watched from Dewar's Kai, standing erect on the animal's broad back.

John saw that the renegades were more than holding their own on the left wing, and that the right wing was falling back in confusion. He motioned Dewar to take three out of four of the reserve, and charge in support of that right wing.

He saw the force rush forward shouting, saw the wing stiffen and move forward in an overwhelming wave toward the canal. It was exciting, enthralling, despite the fact that blood was being shed. And in the excitement he forgot to watch the left wing!

An excited bowman jerking on his sandal, recalled John's attention to the left. The wing had crumpled and was falling back.

With a wave of his arm and a shout which meant nothing to his men, John charged ahead on the Kai. The fifty bowmen took up the shout, and followed.

In five minutes John was in the midst of a milling throng, fighting with bow, and fist and fallen spear.

"Kalen. John, Kalen!" He heard Jalu's voice in the midst of the melee. Then something clipped him on the head and he knew no more.

But the renegades were driving the soldiers of Kalendar back across the central canal. He had kept his word to them.

## CHAPTER XII

### Fortunes of War

JOHN KALEN was sleeping a troubled sleep. He tossed in dreams of awaking aboard ship at sea. Shadowy forms, of Michael, and a crew of thirty-nine men whom he dared not touch, crept in and out of his subconscious mind like wraiths. And forces penetrated his brain until he twisted and squirmed, and dreamed of beds into which he sank until he smothered.

Voices wavered above him, receded, came close, and were gone again. The odor of medicants assailed his nostrils. Strong lights bothered his eyes even through closed lids. He thought of Jalu—and was suddenly wide awake!

His eyes beheld a room so vast, so luxurious that he rubbed his eyes and looked again. His body rested on a mattress so caressingly soft that—if it were true—it explained his dreams, for he had been sleeping on the ground. Silken covers were over him, and a white-coated figure, obviously a doctor, stood by the foot of the bed, silent, attentive.

John had lost consciousness a leader of the renegades. He awoke, Kalen of Kalendar.

"Do I need you?" he asked softly of the doctor. The man looked down at him, obviously puzzled.

Orkus, stepping forward from nowhere, bowed.

"I have been designated as interpreter, my Kalen, until you have disposed of the cases of Gared and Jalu Dulon." He turned then and spoke to the doctor, then spoke again to John.

"He says you no longer need him, but that you have not bade him leave."

John smiled, waved his hand, and the doctor departed.

"You are rested, sire?" Orkus asked.

"And hungry," John said. But the breakfast was being wheeled to his bedside even as he spoke. He ate almost ravenously of a civilized meal (even though some of the foods were strange) for the first time in more than a week. Orkus, standing stiffly beside the bed, spoke as soon as he had finished.

"Two cases, sire, have been considered by council to be of drastic importance, and are waiting your disposal."

"Two cases, Orkus? And the charges?" John was more curious than concerned.

"Gared, and Jalu Dulon, sire. Gared is charged with violation of the unwritten law in leaving Kalendar

in your absence. His life, barring your immediate mercy, is forfeit."

John frowned, "And Jalu?"

"Jalu Dulon," Orkus' voice sounded strained, yet he spoke the words in a monotone as of a rote, "is charged with failure to protect the body of the Kalen in the fulfillment of her mission to the outer world, permitting him to suffer indignities and banishment; rebellion against council orders in leading armed men outside the wall toward Tago Lake."

"They are in custody?" John asked quickly.

"Yes, my Kalen, they are in custody, waiting your immediate disposal."

"Bring Jalu in," John's voice was sharp.

Orkus motioned to a side panel, then deliberately turned and stood with his face to the wall. The panel slid back, and Jalu, the golden girl stood proudly, head erect in the closet facing the room. She was nude. Her long, golden hair fell to her waist, providing some slight covering for her body, but only tending to accentuate her loveliness. She stepped forward slowly without a word. Short steps. And John noticed that her hands were manacled, and that her ankles were chained so that she could step only a few inches at a time.

For a moment he stared, fascinated. Then he bounced from his bed and threw the silk covering about her shoulders.

"Orkus, who is responsible for this?"

"Council, sire."

"And who heads the council?"

"Kandu, with Jastro and Wherl as his associates in the action. They have been supreme since Garek Dulon went on his hunting trip." Orkus still faced the wall, stiffly.

"Have these manacles removed at once, Orkus, and send Garek to me, unmanacled—and robed." John slipped into a dressing gown, and stood, waiting, pale with anger. Orkus strode from the room.

Two young girls ran forward from the closet and unfastened Jalu's steel bonds. The girls remained kneeling, one at either side of their late prisoner, heads bowed. John looked at them curiously. Each wore only the high-laced sandals they called Drezza wear, and wide belts, perhaps a foot wide, studded with polished buttons of steel, or some similar metal, from the belts were suspended hooks to which were attached the manacles, and a knife, similar to a huntingknife. Both girls were exceedingly attractive.

A door at the far end of the room opened and Orkus followed Garek Dulon into the room, and came slowly forward.

"Why don't they rise, Jalu?" John asked softly.

"They've done what they were told to do."

Waves of color were suffusing Jalu's face. She was trembling. Yet her eyes faced John's own, proud and frank.

"They await their judgment in turn, John Kalen," she whispered. "When you freed me their lives were forfeit for having been a party to the holding of a prin-

cess. And so that it is not too late for you to rectify I must tell you quickly that when you threw the cover of your bed about my shoulders you claimed me as the Kalen's property. The Kalen has a right to take what he wishes—but I wish you might not take me that way, sire."

"Would you marry me, Jalu?" John whispered in turn, for Orkus and Garek had stopped some distance back.

"Gladly, John, Kalen, gladly." Jalu's voice held a new happiness, as if a fear had been tossed away. And John took a deep breath and looked out the window. Power over life, and death, and people was his—such power as he had never dreamed belonged to any man. It frightened him.

"Jalu," he said slowly. "The fate of these two girls is in your hands. Give your judgment mercifully. They are too young and beautiful to die."

"Thank you, John, Kalen. They will be attached to my household, then, and you will know they live and are nearby." She spoke a few words and the girls fell forward and kissed her feet. John shook his head hopelessly and motioned Orkus and Garek to come forward.

"Garek," he said without preliminaries. "We are facing far more serious breaches of the law than yours. You suffered ten days imprisonment by the renegades, and fulfilled my mission well yesterday. I am confident of your loyalty. You are therefore restored as Primate of Kalendar. Council is dissolved. Kando, Jastro and Wherl will remain in their homes under guard until I have cleared this entire matter. Orkus will act as supreme commander of the military, answerable direct to me.

"Orkus, were any prisoners taken yesterday?"

"Eleven, sire, including one Dewar, who Dulon says befriended you. We have held them thus far despite council orders."

"There are no council orders in force since Kando sat at head of council," John said brusquely. "Will there be any trouble in enforcing what I have said here?"

Garek Dulon spoke for the first time.

"Thanking you humbly, my Kalen, for your favors. There will be no question of our authority under your orders if we emerge free from the front door of your palace in proper robes, while you in tunic and head-dress stand on the upper balcony."

John's brow wrinkled once more at the scope of his sudden power. He almost feared to free a man lest that man's captors die.

"See that none is punished, without my direct order. Bring Dewar and the other prisoners to me. I suppose I have a throne-room or something."

"Yes, sire."

"You two will be busy. I need an interpreter. Jalu will leave with you, but will return, attended properly, to act as my interpreter. Now, hurry, all of you. Dress, while I dress. We must end the confusion in Kalendar quickly."

"And, one question Orkus. You did not poison your bullets or spears yesterday. Why?"

"The Kalen might be among the enemy, sire." Orkus bowed, and John's three friends moved slowly from the room.

JALU returned within the hour, smiling happily. She waited in an ante-room until John joined her, resplendent in his tunic and golden head-dress. Pacing slowly two steps behind him, at his right, Jalu explained in a low voice as they traversed the soft-carpeted hallways, lined with tapestries. "These tapestries picture the history of Kalendar, my Kalen, from the earliest days of its legendary history until now. An eagle left a baby girl in the valley. Another eagle left a baby boy. From them the nobles of Kalendar descend. Twelve Indians with their squaws lowered themselves down the cliffs while fleeing from an enemy fifteen centuries ago. They were white Indians. From them the people of Kalendar descend. There was dispute in the councils for centuries as to supremacy until the coming of the Kalen, your father nearly fifty years ago. Since his coming there has been no dispute. There will be none under you.

"On the topmost floor is an astronomical observatory with a huge telescope. On occasion this telescope may be turned to observe through special lenses, the activity of all walled Kalendar.

"In other rooms are machines and chemicals, and testing apparatus. In still others machines which throw moving pictures on the wall. It will take a year to familiarize yourself with the Palace." She stopped speaking.

They moved to a hand-carved door at the end of the passage. It swung open silently and John Kalen, stood beside a carved throne. He was startled.

"Sit on the throne, my Kalen," Jalu said softly, kneeling as she spoke. And John's eyes noted that a hundred people filled the domed room, and that in front of the assembly, eleven kneeling figures were renegades.

John sat and the assembly rose. He saw Dewar—a puzzled look on the cleancut savage face, hands manacled.

"Remove Dewar's handcuff's and bring him to me," John said. Jalu repeated the order and in an instant Dewar's hands were free and he stepped forward with a guard on either side.

"Send the guards away from him. No punishments however." Again Jalu spoke and the guards fell back.

"Dewar is my friend?" John asked, and Jalu repeated. Dewar's face brightened into a smile. He spoke. "Always," Jalu said.

"Cannot your people and my people be friends?" he asked again. "Cannot we give you cloth for clothing in exchange for fish from the lakes and the canals? Cannot we help you to bring about order and comforts in your city?"

The faces of the other prisoners were brightening hopefully. They exchanged glances. Dewar was

growing in their eyes into a leader. He agreed to question after question as John asked them. The ten renegades still in manacles confirmed his answers.

"Would you protect and treat as friends, men we would send to teach you order? Would you obey my orders if they bring you to better living? And avoid treachery?"

Again there was a willing acquiescence, and John sat in thought for a moment.

"Bring Kandu, Jastro, and Wherl to me," he said brusquely. There was a stir at the back of the room as twenty soldiers took their leave. Through Jalu, John invited Dewar to sit on the step beside the throne and chatted with him for ten minutes. The man's eyes grew bright in appreciation of his closeness to grandeur. John knew that their friendship was one which would endure in loyalty as long as both should live. Suddenly he became aware that his former Judges stood before him.

"I have in mind," John said slowly so that the entire assemblage might hear, "that the situation through which we have been passing is unusual.

"Dewar, seated beside me, is a leader among the renegades. The very fact that he sits beside me here will make him a greater and more respected leader.

"I want to make of Tagoland, a dominion of Kalendar, and I am disposed to give you three men a new opportunity to prove you can govern wisely. You will return with Dewar and his fellows to Tago City for one year. You will be provided with comforts, and a guard of twenty soldiers.

"With Dewar's aid, you will establish social order among the renegades. You will segregate the hopelessly insane into suitable quarters, and help the intelligent balance of the population to establish trade. Their farms need improving. You will attend to that. You will help them build boats to replace their rafts. You will establish a militia to serve as a police force.

"Have the manacles removed from the prisoners. Feed them well, and prepare to return with them to Tago City this afternoon."

The meeting was over. The assembly had departed. John stood in the vast hallway alone with Jalu.

"Do you think it will work?" he asked her softly.

"I know it is the greatest step forward in Kalendar in fifty years," she said softly, her eyes proudly looking into his. "I only fear as to whether the council is to be trusted too far. They have been humiliated—and if they should seek revenge?"

"Then we have Dewar." John said lightly, "but now, Jalu, is there any reason why I should not kiss you?"

Jalu blushed.

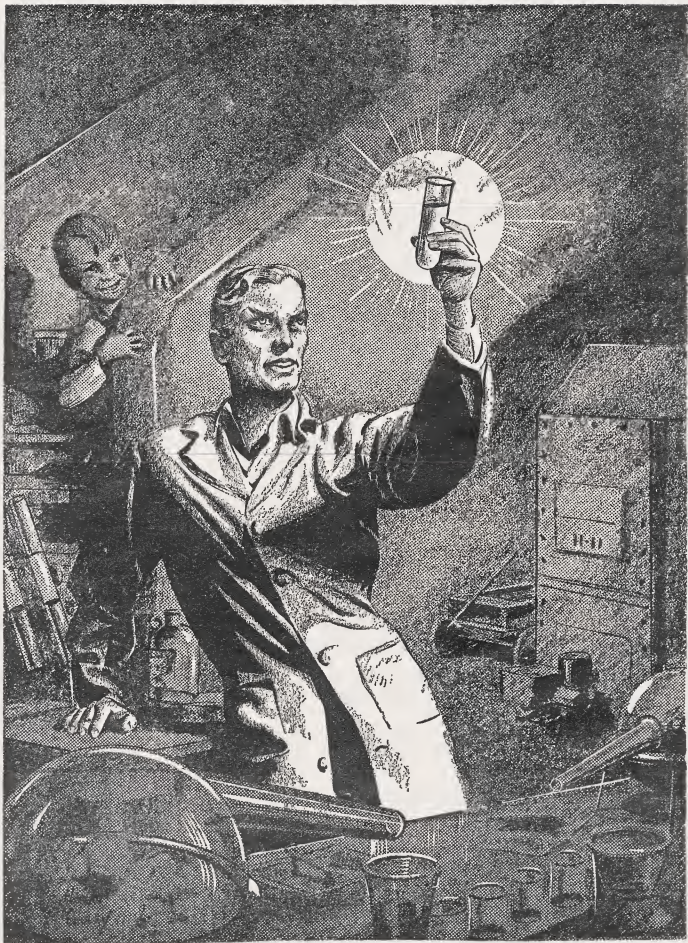
"No reason, my Kalen," she said.

"Then Kalendar can wait—but where can we go on our honeymoon?"

"We might," she said timidly, "explore your palace secrets—together—"

"Right," John decided, "and what matters it if there is revolt in Kalendar?"





A strange elair, full of weird power!



# THE AMAZING INVENTION OF WILBERFORCE WEEMS

BY  
NELSON S. BOND

**All knowledge and power  
was his as the amazing elixir of  
genius flowed through the veins  
of timid Wilberforce Weems**

**W**ILBERFORCE took one last, lingering, hopeless look at the page before him, then resolutely closed the book over a pudgy forefinger. He shut his eyes; knit his brows. Doggedly he began to repeat the text.

"Although repossession values are included in the total Used Car Department gross loss, they should *not* be included when ascertaining the cause of the—*the—*"

The furrows deepened. The tight web of tiny, white lines about his eyes relaxed. His fingers twitched, and the book slipped open . . . just the tiniest bit. Wilberforce opened one eye . . . just the tiniest bit. Then, blushing, he hurried on, "The total loss directly applicable to Buying, Reconditioning and Selling of used cars. The income—"

From the adjacent room rose a familiar squall.

"Unkie!"

Wilberforce's straining memory faltered, stalled, and ground to a four-wheel stop. He sighed. He answered,

"Yes, Herbie?"

"I wanna dinka water, Unkie!"

Wilberforce said patiently, "You just *had* a drink of water, Herbie. Now, go to sleep. It's getting late."

"I wanna *nother* dinka water!" insisted the plaintive voice.

Wilberforce glanced at the clock as he rose wearily. Had anyone told him, three hours ago, that within the space of one hundred and eighty short minutes a man could grow to abhor the sound of a single word, Wilberforce would have laughed in derision. But not now. For between the hours of seven-thirty and ten-thirty, he had learned to loathe and despise one word. The word which meant himself. "Unkie!" As emitted at regular intervals by the four year old towhead in the adjoining room.

Wilberforce filled the glass in the bathroom, letting the water run for a minute to "get cold." Then he walked into the nursery; snapped on the light. Herbie was standing up in his crib, wide awake as he had been when Wilberforce had undressed him and put him to bed three hours ago.

"Here's your water, Herbie!" said Wilberforce. "Now, I want you to go right to sleep!" He hoped his voice sounded acceptably stern and avuncular. This was the first time he had ever "watched house" for

his sister and brother-in-law. And he meant it to be the last.

Herbie said, "Fank you, Unkie!" in a meek voice. He took a sparrowlike sip of water; handed back the glass. Then he smiled disarmingly. "Tell me a story, Unkie?"

Wilberforce said, "No! It's 'way past your bedtime. What will Mama and Papa say if they come home and find you're still awake? Goodnight."

He went out and turned off the light. He listened outside the door for a moment, hoping to hear a small body lie down. He didn't. With forebodings of trouble yet to come, he returned to his studies.

**W**ILBERFORCE WEEMS was an automobile salesman. He was not a particularly good one. He knew the selling points of his product. That it had Quintri-Coil Springing, Y-Membered Frame, 93 H. P. Savo-Gas Master Engine with Rifle-Geared Lubrication. He knew it had Streak-Lined Hunter Body Frame, with Crashproof Glass and Multiple-Center-Steering-Control, but—

He couldn't tell it! For despite his long legs, athlete's body, lanky handsomeness—Wilberforce was dreadfully shy!

Every time he got a prospect into a demonstrator, he froze in sudden panic. Embarrassment may have had something to do with it, for Wilberforce always had trouble getting into a car. Especially a coupe, in which he had to push the Adjusto-Seat-Slide all the way back before he could even squeeze under the wheel. By the time he got the car in motion, Wilberforce had forgotten all the selling points he had ever learned. He forgot to point out the great improvement of the Flood-Wash Lubrication system over the

old-fashioned Duplex-Splatter. He forgot to draw the customer's attention to the Permatone finish of the dashboard. He forgot—well, he forgot everything, and just sat there stuttering and stammering like a vociferous blimp!

The Company had a remedy for that situation. They provided their salesmen with manuals which had only to be memorized. But Wilberforce had been studying his manual, now, for more than two months. And was getting nowhere with it—fast! He had hoped that tonight, alone in his sister's home, he might be able to memorize the section dealing with Used Car Trade-in Allowances, but—

"Unkie!"

Wilberforce groaned. There it was again! The reason he was making no headway. The reason why, tomorrow, old Sour-Puss Petersen would call him on the carpet and give him his walking papers!

But he said, "Yes, Herbie?"

"I wanna go to the bathroom!"

Wilberforce called impatiently, "Now, Herbie, that's not necessary. You—"

Then he stopped, suddenly remembering the number of times Herbie had demanded a "dinka water." He said,

"Very well. But then I want you to go right to sleep, do you understand?"

"Yes, Unkie." Meekly.

The trip was safely negotiated. Herbie was tucked in for the tenth or twelfth time—Wilberforce had lost count—and again there was quiet. Wilberforce began again,

"Although repossession values are included—"

"Unkie!"

Wilberforce groaned. His fingers tightened on the book in a spasm of despair. He yelled, "Yes, yes! Now what do you want?"

"You fordot to give me my medicine!" prompted young Herbie.

Wilberforce, a broken man, appeared at the doorway. He glared down at his nephew.

"Medicine?" he said. "What kind of medicine?"

"For my tummy," said Herbie. "An' for my head, an' for my footses, an' for my—"

"Oh, all right!" choked Wilberforce. "I'll give it to you. Be quiet!"

HE went into the bathroom and opened the cabinet. A gleaming array of bottles confronted him. Some were liquid, some were powder, some were powdery-liquid. He stared bewilderedly at this galaxy of nostrums. It never occurred to him to doubt Herbie's need of bedtime medicines. This was Wilberforce's first experience as a child-nurse, and he didn't know the depths of infant strategy.

He pawed over the panaceas. He found one labeled, "Headache," and ladled out the proper child dosage. He took down the one marked, "Stomach pains," and poured the proper amount in a glass. There was one for the feet, and one—

"Aaah!" said Wilberforce. He poured into the glass a generous dose from a bottle labeled, "Slocum's Syrup for Sleepless Souls."

Wilberforce was not a doctor. He was an automobile salesman, and not a very good one, at that. His methods were—well, unorthodox, to say the least. He poured all of the liquids into the same glass. He dissolved in them the two or three powders that seemed necessary. He added a touch of glycerine to make the potion smooth; and a little cherry cough-syrup to lend it flavor. He carried the glass to Herbie.

"Here!" he said.

Herbie looked at the glass dubiously. He had not bargained for this. He said, feebly, "I—I feel all right, now, Unkie. I—"

"Drink it!" said Wilberforce, his patience exhausted. "Drink it, or by golly, I'll—"

Herbie drank. Two mouthfuls. Then he gasped. His eyes bulged. His little body jerked. He said, "Oo-wah!"

Wilberforce said, "How do you feel now?" He put the glass of medicine on the night table; picked up the text-book from which he had been studying; prepared to go back to the other room.

"Oo-wah!" said Herbie. His little eyes had a glassy look. Wilberforce got worried. Herbie choked. He began to turn a brilliant pink. . . .

"Hey!" shouted Wilberforce. He reached out to touch Herbie. He still had the book in his hand, and in his haste he hit Herbie's forehead with it. Not exactly hard, but not exactly easy, either. Herbie bounced down on the cot. His breath came in sobbing gulps.

Wilberforce went into a panic. He yelled, "Herbie, Unkie didn't mean it! Are you all right? Are you—"

Then the spasm passed, and Herbie sat bolt upright in bed. He said, plainly, distinctly, "Unkie!"

"Yes, Herbie?"

"Although repossession values are included in the total Used Car Department gross loss, they should not be included when ascertaining the cause of the total loss directly applicable to Buying, Reconditioning and Selling of used cars. The income of Reserve Credits from—"

Wilberforce started! Word for word, the infant was repeating the text which he had been struggling to memorize all evening. He gulped,

"Herbie—where did you learn that?"

"—if you will assume," continued Herbie placidly, "a standard quota evaluation equal and equivalent to the past year's rationalization value on stock turnover—"

Wilberforce knew what that passage was. It was the section on Overhead Computations, which so far he had not had time to study! He looked at Herbie; then at the book in his hand. A sudden thought struck him. He said, "Herbie, wait!"

He rushed downstairs; pawed wildly through the bookcase. He was looking for something light; some-

thing a child *should* read. He found a copy of "Alice in Wonderland." He raced upstairs with it. Gently, this time, he raised the book; tapped it against Herbie's forehead. Then, fearfully, he said,

"Herbie—recite 'Jabberwocky'!"

Obediently, the child began,

"'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves,

Did gyre and gimble in the wabe,

All mimsy were the borogroves,

And the mome raths—"

"Stop!" cried Wilberforce. "I—I mean, that will do, Herbie. Ohhhh!"

He tottered. His wild hunch was right. Somehow—through some strange, unsuspected chemistry, his admixturing of medicines had brought about this fantastic result. Knowledge, transferable by the simple application of any book to the forehead!

Herbie suddenly yawned. He said, "Unkie, I fink I go to sleep now—" and forthwith proceeded to do so. Wilberforce looked at him lying there for a moment, leaned over and felt his pulse. It was normal. As a matter of fact, everything was normal, now, about Herbie except—except—

Then Wilberforce Weems' eyes lighted. He came to a great resolve. He picked up the glass from the night table, tilted back his head, and took three *great, big swallows!*

THE doorbell rang. Wilberforce put the glass down hastily, guiltily, and ran down to answer it. He hadn't expected Myra and Sam home this soon—

But it wasn't Myra and Sam! It was none other than Old Sourpuss—Josiah B. Petersen himself! Wilberforce's boss. And his face was a thundercloud. He seemed about to explode with righteous wrath. He shook his fist in Wilberforce's face.

"So here you are, you young rascal! They told me I'd find you here! Well—"

Wilberforce gulped uneasily. He said,

"Wo-won't you come in?"

Petersen stamped in, muttering heavily. He reopened the attack as soon as they reached the living room.

"I suppose you realize, Weems, that it's an exceptional thing that brings me out of my house at this hour of the night. Well, it may interest you to know that I've just been talking over the telephone to—*Mr. Townsend!*"

He shot the name at Wilberforce. Wilberforce winced. He said, weakly, "M-Mr. Townsend?"

"You heard me! Wilberforce Weems, do you know that this afternoon you almost cost our company a profit amounting to fourteen thousands of dollars? By your sheer ignorance and inability to sell the best car on the market. Mr. Townsend is the buyer for the Green-and-Gold Taxicab Company. He was all ready to order our Deluxe Omnibus model until you—*you!*"

He spluttered and choked. Wilberforce said pallidly, "I—I'm sorry, Mr. Petersen. I—"

"Sorry! Why, confound you! You ought to be sorry. Had I not called Townsend up by chance, and learned what had happened—" The boss finally lost his temper entirely. He grabbed a book off the living room table. "But that's not the reason I came here tonight. I came to tell you not to come in tomorrow morning. You're through! Done! Washed up! Fired!"

And with the last word, as a mark of emphasis, he shied the volume at Wilberforce. Wilberforce ducked—but not in time. The book hit him a glancing blow over the temple, shooting a galaxy of stars before his eyes, momentarily stunning him. Then he came out of it. And when he came out of it, he was a new man. A voice, strangely like his own voice, but deeper, more resonant, more assured, cried out,

"Just a moment, Sourpuss!"

PETERSEN, halfway to the door, wheeled, shocked. His face turned crimson.

"What? What did you call me?"

Something stronger than himself impelled Wilberforce forward. He stopped, finally, with his jutting jaw mere inches from Petersen's frightened face. His voice was the roar of an enraged lion.

"I called you 'Sourpuss'—because that's just what you are! Why, you insignificant little squirt, I ought to put you across my knee and spank you—"

Wilberforce made a lunge for Petersen. But the boss squealed and dove for the safety of an armchair. Wilberforce stopped.

"On second thought," he mused aloud, "I won't bother you after all. You're not worth it. Anyone who is so stupid as to not recognize my superior intelligence, my sterling character, my deep potentialities—"

"Stupid!" squawked Petersen. "What do you mean? I'm stupid?"

"Of course, you dope!" roared Wilberforce. "Why else would you have me—*me!*" he repeated loudly, "working as a common, ordinary, everyday *salesman*. When, by all rights, I should be at least sales manager—and maybe even a vice-president of the company!"

Petersen's sense of humor overcome his judgment. He emitted a snort of derision.

"You a vice-president!" he chortled. "Or even sales manager! Why, you don't even know the sales quota expectancy in our region and zone. How could *you!*"

Wilberforce said, "Oh, is that so! Well, just wait here a minute!"

He ducked into an adjoining room; searched feverishly through his sales portfolio. Finally he found what he was looking for. A *precis* of automobile sales in the United States for the period embracing 1920-1939. He grabbed the book; tapped it lightly against his forehead. Instantly things began to swirl before his eyes, but when the moment of vertigo had passed—

"See here, Sourpuss!" he yelled, stalking back to confront Petersen. "You're the stupid one! You can't

even take advantage of the figures when you know them. Now, last year our company sold 687 cars in this area. Year before that, it was 713. Our total sales represent oh-point-two per cent of the total sales throughout the country. But the year we increased our newspaper advertising by seven-point-four per cent, our sales increased nineteen-point-four-four! In other words, just because you're too miserly, and too much of a skinflint to spend a little money on advertising—"

Petersen's mouth dropped open. He gulped,

"W-weems—how did you know all that?"

Wilberforce said airily, "It's my business to know such things. You've been making a mistake, Sourpuss. I'm not just a salesman—I'm exceptionally gifted at organization."

Petersen's head bobbed. He said, weakly, "I—I am beginning to think you're right, Wilberforce. Perhaps I have misjudged you—"

Just then there was a sound at the door, and Sam and Myra came in. They stared at Wilberforce, then at Petersen. Wilberforce's brother-in-law said, "Hyah, folks!"

"Myra," said Wilberforce mechanically, "Sam—I want you to meet my employer, Mr. Petersen."

"Glad to know you, pal," said Sam. Then, curiously, "What's up, Willie? You gettin' the cat tied to—"

"Samuel!" interrupted Myra. She smiled, meanwhile planting a French heel on her husband's instep. "Well, we'll be running along upstairs, Wilberforce. Was Herbie a good boy tonight?"

Wilberforce said, vaguely, "Oh, yes. Quite good."

HE waited until their footsteps had reached the top of the stairwell. Then, to Petersen,

"So you're coming around, eh, Sourpuss?"

"Don't call me Sourpuss!" snapped Petersen irately. "I—I'm not sure about you yet, Wilberforce. There's something awfully fishy about the way you're acting. I don't—"

Wilberforce smiled complacently. He said, "Now, look here, Petersen, I'm beginning to get tired of this stalling. I don't like people to underestimate my abilities. I'm a well educated man. Oh, maybe I didn't have much schooling, in a formal way, but—"

He strode to the bookcase.

"Just as an example, choose any subject you can think of. I'll show you why I am so unusual."

Petersen said suspiciously, "Well—all right. But no tricks, now. Let's see. How about—er—*Drosophila*?"

Wilberforce said, "Dro—" then stopped. He had been about to ask how to spell it. Already Petersen was staring at him dubiously. He said, "Oh, yes! You shouldn't *mutter* your words like that, Chief. Dro—here we are! Now you look it up in the Encyclopedia while I—"

He took the DEN-EFI volume from the bookcase. As he did so, he contrived to stumble slightly. The

book jounced up and bumped his forehead. Again there was a moment of giddiness; a fresh, flooding rush of new knowledge. . . .

"Did you hurt yourself?" cried Petersen.

"No. Nothing at all," smiled Wilberforce. "Now, you were asking about *Drosophila*? Well, let me see. The *Drosophila* is a genus containing the common fruit fly, *Drosophila melanogaster*, used extensively in breeding experiments to study inheritance of characteristics and the mechanism of heredity. FitzLawrence O'Hara discovered in 1874—"

"Amazing!" cried Petersen. "Astounding! Incomprehensible! My dear boy, you have a memory that is nothing short of incredible! Do you realize that you were repeating the Encyclopedia *word for word*? Why, you must have literally pored over this to—"

Wilberforce smiled.

"It's nothing, really," he said coyly. "I—well, I just absorbed it, that's all!"

"And to think," continued Petersen, "I've been holding back a man of your genius in the sales force! Wilberforce, I apologize for all the mean things I've ever said to you. In the morning, when you come in, I shall attempt to prove I mean it—" He smiled companionably. "You will find your name newly printed—on the door of the office next to mine!"

"That's fine," said Wilberforce heartily. "Good-night, Sou—I mean, Mr. Petersen!"

Petersen left. Wilberforce picked up the book which Petersen had thrown at him, and which had remained, ever since, lying on the floor. As he did so, he noted with approval, its title. "*Wake Up and Assert Yourself!*"

HE was feeling quite pleased with himself when he went upstairs. And why not? But he felt somewhat less pleased a few minutes later when both Sam and Myra confronted him. Sam was holding the now-empty glass in which Wilberforce had mixed his curious concoction. Myra was staring at him wrathfully.

"And what," she demanded, hands on her hips, "might this have been?"

Wilberforce tried to smile. It came out sour. He stammered,

"W—what happened to the rest of it?"

"Unfortunately," stormed Sam, "we both tasted it, to see what hideous mixture you were forcing on our child! What sort of an uncle are you, Wilberforce, to give a wee tot a draught like this? Why, I ought to—"

He stepped forward angrily. Wilberforce retreated. He said, "Sam—Myra—Look, it's all right—"

"All right!" stormed Myra. "Why, you might have killed him! Look how soundly he's sleeping. I don't know what you mixed into this—" She sniffed the concoction suspiciously. "—but it smells awful!"

Wilberforce said, "Myra—you know the trouble you've always had memorizing recipes?"



"Yes. But what has *that* to do with—"

"Just a minute!" Wilberforce ducked out of the room. He returned with the Homemaker's Recipe Guide; strode to his sister's side and tapped the book gently against her forehead. She cried out in sudden fright; reeled dizzily. Wilberforce steadied her. Sam yelled, "Why, you brute! Attacking Myra, my wife!" and made a lunge for Wilberforce. Myra rallied out of the fog. She demanded,

"What's the big idea! What do you mean by hitting me with that cook-book!"

"Myra," stammered Wilberforce, "How would you go about making a *bouillabaisse New Orleãesns*?"

Myra said promptly, "Why, you take  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of oil, 2 chopped onions,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pounds of haddock,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pounds of cod, 2 slices of lemon, one boiled lobster—"

Sam stared. He said, dazedly, "Myra!"

There was a look of amazed elation in Myra's eyes. She said excitedly, "Sam—I've just remembered the recipe for Boiled Cider Pie! You take  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of rich, boiled cider, a teaspoon of butter,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of grated maple sugar, 2 eggs,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of seeded raisins—"

Sam stammered, "W—what does this mean?"

"Nothing," said Wilberforce complacently, "except that we three—and little Herbie—now have it within our power to become the world's most intelligent people. Sam, you've always been interested in astronomy, haven't you?"

"Y—yes. But I never could memorize—"

"You can now." Wilberforce produced the second volume he had brought from the bookcase. It was "Star Secrets," by Professor J. Climpson Flubb, R. R. G. He tapped it against Sam's forehead. Sam staggered. Then—

"What are the names," demanded Wilberforce, "of the satellites of Saturn?"

Mechanically, Sam began, "Why, anybody knows that. Mimas, Enceladus, Tethys, Dione, Rhea, Titan—"

"Hah!" said Wilberforce.

The eyes of his sister and brother-in-law were great as saucers. They stared at him mutely. Finally Sam ventured,

"The—the medicine, Wilberforce?"

Wilberforce nodded. "My own invention," he boasted. "It heightens the receptivity of the mind. You can memorize anything you want to, merely by tapping printed matter against your forehead. It immediately transfers its learning to you."

A sound from the crib turned them all. Little Herbie had awakened, and was rubbing his eyes sleepily. He said,

"Morning, Mama an' Papa. Morning, Unkie."

"It's not morning, honey," said Myra. "Go to sleep."

"I wanna dinka water," protested Herbie.

Myra lifted him; carried him out of the room. Sam turned to Wilberforce.

"Wilby," he said in hallowed tones, "it looks like you've hit the jackpot! Will this work on anyone?"

Wilberforce started, "I believe so. It—" Then a cry from the other room stopped him. Myra came racing back to confront her husband angrily. Her voice was quivering with rage.

"Samuel, you—you unspeakable brute! How often have I told you to stop buying those sexy humor magazines? You should be ashamed of yourself! Now, see what you've done—"

Sam said, "But, I didn't do anything, honey? What—"

"He stumbled!" sobbed Myra. "And bumped his head on one of your nasty old magazines—"

Little Herbie appeared in the doorway. He was smiling cherubically. He was saying, "Papa, did you hear the one about the traveling salesman who had to stay overnight on a farm—"

THE next morning, Wilberforce woke with a dull headache. For a moment, the mad experiences of last night seemed like the fantasy of a nightmare—then he remembered everything that had happened; the angry recriminations of Sam and Myra, the way they had finally soothed little Herbie to sleep after permitting him to tell three perfectly awful stories; the way Sam had acted after he had tapped himself on the pate with a copy of *Mein Kampf* and expressed a determination to *drang nach Osten* into their next door neighbor's house; Myra's insistence that the two men allow her to prepare them a full-course dinner at that unrighteous hour of the morning. It was only a brilliant inspiration on Wilberforce's part that had permitted any sleep at all. Surreptitiously, he had tapped Myra, Sam and himself with a copy of the popular ballad, "Ain't Ya Kinda Drowsy, Dear?"—which had acted as a soporific on all of them.

He didn't feel up to another session with his relatives, so he stole away from the house, had a bit of breakfast in town, then went to the office. There he found factual evidence that last night had not been sheer fantasy. He found workmen busily engaged in painting, on the glass pane of the office next to Old Sour—Mr. Petersen's—his name. To his unbiased eye, the legend, "Wilberforce Weems, General Manager," looked very, very good.

Josiah Petersen rubbed his hands gleefully as Wilberforce entered.

"Well, good morning, Wilberforce," he said genially. "Let's get right down to work! The first thing I want you to consider is the question of our new advertising appropriation. What newspapers and magazines do you recommend?"

Wilberforce said, "Why—er—uh—"

Petersen frowned.

"Well, speak up, man! You appeared to have sterling ideas on the subject last night!"

"Er—let me get my notebook," said Wilberforce. "I never—er—move hastily, or without consulting my notes."

He lumbered from the room; went into the outer office. There he pawed hastily through a desk for a

copy of *Standard Rate & Data*. It was a bulky volume. He lifted it; punched it smartly against his forehead. Through the familiar moment of reeling inequilibrium he heard the secretary's astonished voice crying, "Why, Mr. Weems!" But he didn't bother answering. He had the information he wanted. He returned to Petersen's sanctum.

"I would suggest," he said with perfect assurance, pretending to read from his small pocket notebook, "the *Star*, because of its urban coverage; the *Times-Call*, because of its low milline rate; the *Borough News*, because of its rural readers; the *Gazette*—"

Petersen smiled broadly.

"Remarkable!" he said. "Wonderful! Just the papers I had decided on, after a long study of the question. My decision appears to be justified, Wilberforce." He stretched out an eager hand. "May I see your notebook? It is marvelous to think that a man who, yesterday, was a common salesman has kept such careful notes—"

Wilberforce backed away hastily. He said,

"If—if you don't mind, Mr. Petersen, there are lots of things in here which are rather—"

Petersen smiled again.

"I understand, Wilberforce. Private, eh? Very well, I respect your privacy. And now, about our Used Car problem?"

After all, Wilberforce had absorbed the entire sales manual the night before. They talked for an hour, at the end of which time, Petersen said,

"Oh, by the way, Wilberforce, I enjoyed meeting your relatives last night. I'd like to know them better. Perhaps if I could come out to dinner some time—say, tonight—"

Wilberforce froze. He thought, suddenly, of Sam's devouring of *Mein Kampfe*, of little Herbie's prattled bawdy jokes. He stammered, "But, Mr. Petersen—"

"Tut-tut, son! I'm used to taking pot luck. We'll call it a date, then. About seven-thirty?"

Wilberforce nodded miserably. He said, "Yes sir!"

HE didn't work well the rest of the day. Fortunately, little was expected of him, since his new private office was in the process of being renovated. He amused himself—tried to rid himself of the thought of impending disaster, rather—by strolling over to the public library.

He strolled moodily down the long lanes of books, brushing up on knowledge that heretofore he had always considered too deep for him. He started out by catching up on the latest fiction, but stopped after the first two or three volumes, feeling faintly sick at the stomach. He made a stab at "*Gone With the Wind*," but only managed to absorb the first thousand pages with his first wallop, and didn't feel that the rest of it was worth the effort. Since he had previously tapped himself with "*Vanity Fair*," he felt he was just running over the same ground for the second time.

He had a good time, however, with the *World Year*

*Book*, some encyclopediae, and a folio of back issues of the *Readers' Digest*. At last, feeling sufficiently well informed on news, he searched out the answer to a problem which had been bothering him considerably. He had to literally beat his forehead black and blue with musty tomes—but ultimately he got it.

Then, with a thoughtful expression, he soothed his troubled feelings with a few anthologies of poetry. Later he managed, with the aid of a musical score, to comprehend for the first time the depth and scope of a Wagnerian opera.

But eventually he had to turn his steps homeward. He had telephoned Myra and informed her of Petersen's impending visit. The news sent her into ecstasies. She immediately set about preparing an elaborate dinner . . . though she did advise Wilberforce, somewhat wanly, that Sam had not gone to work.

"He's out at Locarno racetrack," she said. "He spent all morning hitting himself with old form sheets. Now he says he has a system."

"And little Herbie?" asked Wilberforce.

"Inventing a space-ship," said Myra disconsolately. "He fell out of his crib this morning onto a pile of Sam's old copies of *Fantastic Adventures*!"

So Wilberforce went home, still apprehensive but hopeful that the recent acquisition of a science-fiction background might have driven from little Herbie's mind the story he had related with such gusto last night. The one about the Republican who met an old maid on the golf course. . . .

AT dinner, Petersen appeared to be charmed with Wilberforce's relatives. Everything had gone off smoothly since his arrival. Little Herbie, temporarily diverted with an innocent copy of "Buster Bunny and the Magic Turnip" behaved perfectly. Sam, who had miraculously hit the daily double, paying \$673 on a \$2 ticket, was in rare good humor. Myra's satisfaction with her elaborate banquet expressed itself in a glowing smile.

Dinner ended, and the two men repaired to the living room for cigars and conversation. Since Myra wished to keep a watchful eye on the maid's handling of her best china, wee Herbie was sent in with the men. Contentedly puffing on his cigar, Petersen congratulated Wilberforce.

"It's an inspiration to me," he said, "to see a man whose home life is really contented. There's nothing I like better, especially in these parlous times—"

Trouble struck. "That reminds me," interrupted the voice of little Herbie. "Did I tell you the one about—?"

"Herbie!" said Wilberforce and Sam in one breath. "Tut-tut!" reproved Petersen. "Let the child have his say. Never curb youth. I don't believe in—"

Sam's jaw jutted strangely. A lock of hair tumbled down over his forehead, and Wilberforce remembered, with a burst of horror, Sam's reading *Mein Kampfe*. Sam rose; stood belligerently confronting Petersen.

"You don't believe!" he roared harshly. "And who might you be to tell me how to raise my own child?"

"Now, Sam—" interpolated Wilberforce weakly.

"Silence!" bellowed Sam. He wheeled on the pop-eyed businessman. "You—you individualist! Your mind is tuned to the false ideology of democratic principles. The hour is near when we will force the world to recognize the virtues of the dominant races! The Aryans will arise! The spawn of the Mediterranean will be liquidated!"

Petersen stared. He stammered, "I—I don't understand!"

"Hello, hello, everybody!" chirruped a voice from the doorway. Wilberforce turned—and gasped. It was Myra. And she clutched, in dainty fingers, a current copy of the *Sane Health* magazine. "Haven't we all been silly this evening? Sitting around like this, when every sane and normal person realizes that *nudism* is the only intelligent cult?" And as Wilberforce stared, helpless, she began to slip out of her gown!

Petersen turned crimson. He bellowed. "Have you all gone mad? Wilberforce, what does this mean!"

"—the Republican," piped little Herbie, "said, 'If you ask me, sister, Roosevelt's going to have us—'"

"The time will come," barked Sam, "when the totalitarian states will assume their rightful place—"

"—nothing shameful," continued Myra blithely, "in a beautiful body, shamelessly exposed to the sun—"

"Stop it!" roared Petersen. "Stop it, I say! This is too much! Wilberforce, I take it all back. You're fired! How I was ever deluded into believing—"

WILBERFORCE felt sick. Suddenly, swiftly, completely sick. He groaned and pressed his hands to his head. It felt as though a thousand demons were somewhere inside, pounding at it with a thousand tiny, red hammers. He struggled desperately to speak. He choked out, "I—I—"

Then suddenly he realized he was talking to silence. He forced back his own weakness; stared at his relatives. Like himself, all of them were pressing fevered hands to their foreheads. Sam was groaning. Little Herbie had begun to cry. Myra, with a little bleat of embarrassment, had picked up her discarded evening gown and was racing to another room.

Little Herbie stopped crying. He said, "Papa, I wanna dinka water."

Sam said, in a normal, quiet tone of parental resignation, "All right, sonny. Come with Papa." And they left the room.

Wilberforce's face sagged with chagrin. His voice was tremulous. He said, "Mr. Petersen, I hope you're not offended—"

But, amazingly, Petersen was smiling.

"Tut-tut, Wilberforce. It was so unexpected, that I didn't realize you were just kidding me at first. But I have as keen a sense of humor as the next man." He chuckled. "I declare, your family is delightful. That brother of yours sure can take off Hitler, can't he? And your sister—didn't she make those nudist

enthusiasts look like idiots?"

He bellowed his amusement.

"And that youngster," choked Petersen, "is a little whiz! Of course, I don't approve of teaching innocent children such jokes, but—Hah!—I'll have to remember that one about the Republican!"

Then he stopped chuckling; eyed Wilberforce with approbation.

"Yes, Wilberforce, I'm more than ever pleased with you. You combine good business sense with a gift for providing pleasure. Now, when we take up that matter of dividends with the Board tomorrow—I suppose you have your views on the question?"

Wilberforce shook his head. He knew where he could study up on the matter. In the Organization Stock Reports in the office. But just now—

"I—I'm afraid I don't know much about it, Chief."

Petersen looked pleased.

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Wilberforce," he said. "I was beginning to fear you were a little bit of a showoff. The way you always had figures at your fingertips. There's always opportunity for a man to learn, my boy."

"Yes, sir," said Wilberforce humbly.

Petersen chuckled and rose.

"It's been a pleasant evening, Wilberforce. Now I must be going. If I could have my hat and coat—" And at the door he wagged a finger admonishingly. "See you at eight, my boy. I expect my General Manager to always be on time!"

AFTER he had left, genial and patting Wilberforce on the back not once but many times, Wilberforce groped his way upstairs. He found Sam staring at the collection of bottles in the bathroom. Sam said dully, "I—I've lost my knowledge, Wilby."

"I know. We all have."

"But why?"

Wilberforce strained to remember. He said, "I tried to learn the reason today, in the library. It's all pretty vague now. But it has something to do with the conversion of electricity and thought."

"You see, some scientists believe thought is only a hyperelectrical phenomenon. And even when thoughts are put in print, they retain the electric pattern that generated them."

"When we read, we absorb some of this electrical pattern through the senses. It stimulates the brain and creates new thought-patterns in our minds."

"And—and the drink you invented?"

"All I can figure," confessed Wilberforce, "is that somehow my mixture heightened the chemical receptivity of the brain, so that the *touch* sense, rather than the visual or auditory, was sufficient to describe a new thought-pattern on the brain. Frankly, I don't know. But if I can ever get back that ability, I'll study and learn why . . . and how. . . ."

He pushed Sam aside. He began to lift bottles from the cabinet. He descended to the basement.

"Make way for a genius!" said Wilberforce Weems.



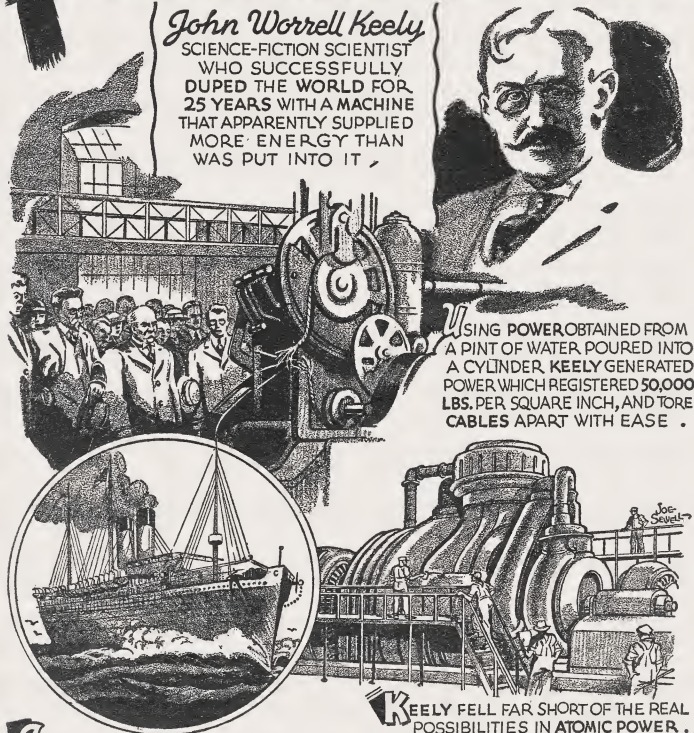
# Pantastic Hoax

**John Worrell Keely**  
SCIENCE-FICTION SCIENTIST  
WHO SUCCESSFULLY  
DUPED THE WORLD FOR  
25 YEARS WITH A MACHINE  
THAT APPARENTLY SUPPLIED  
MORE ENERGY THAN  
WAS PUT INTO IT

By **JULIUS SCHWARTZ**

Never in history has a hoax been so successfully perpetrated on the public, as the now famous hoax of John Worrell Keely, who claimed to have found the secret of multiplying energy by atomic vibration

ILLUSTRATED BY JOE SEWELL



**I**T WAS KEELY'S CLAIM THAT HIS GENERATOR COULD GET ENOUGH POWER FROM A QUART OF WATER TO DRIVE A STEAMSHIP ACROSS THE ATLANTIC FROM NEW YORK TO LIVERPOOL AND RETURN

**I**N 1872 John Worrell Keely induced a number of capitalists to finance his experiments in perfecting a machine which he claimed would supply more energy than was put into it.

After spending two years on the invention Keely took it on a wide lecture tour. And for twenty-five years this fake duped the public which crowded his lecture hall each time he appeared.

Keely, strange to say, had an idea that was startlingly correct. Briefly, he sought to cause all the atoms of a piece of matter to vibrate together in unison, in phase, not haphazardly as they do. Thereby he expected to arrange them into new, more compact forms, and to release some of the energy within. It is evident that Keely, in his discussions of the vibrations of atoms, was anticipating the very phenomenon connected with wireless signaling. And all this occurred long before Marconi's first experiments!

A peculiar feature of the invention was a series of tuning forks, with the vibrations of which Keely claimed to disintegrate air and release an ethereal force capable of rivaling a cyclone in strength if properly utilized and applied.

Keely's imagination was on a par with that of any modern science-fiction author. His machine, among other names, was called "a hydro-pneumatic-pulsating-vacuum-engine," and among the newly invented technical terms which flowed from his lips were "etheric disintegration," "quadruple negative harmonics," and "atomic triplets." The demonstrations were highly successful. A pint of water and a few foot-pounds of energy would supply sufficient force to break iron bars, crush rock, produce tremendous pressures, and do other tasks usually requiring thousands of foot-pounds of energy.

In explanation of what one visitor saw upon one occasion, this individual said that a pint of water poured into a cylinder seemed to work great wonders. The gage showed a pressure of more than 50,000 pounds to the square inch. Great ropes were torn apart, iron bars broken in two or twisted out of shape, bullets discharged through 12 inch planks.

In the glory of his exuberance, Keely now declared that with one quart of water he would be able to send a train of cars from Philadelphia to San Francisco, and that to propel a steamship from New York to Liverpool and return, would require just about a gallon of water. (Today it is estimated that if the hydrogen of only one quart of water were converted to helium, there would be enough energy

released to drive the *Leviathan* across the ocean twice. So Keely was by far too conservative!)

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Finally, upon his death in 1898, the secret of the machine was revealed. Cleverly concealed machinery supplied compressed air, which worked all the wonders.

Keely's invention was a success, insofar as he himself was concerned. During the twenty-five years he succeeded in hoaxing the public, and his backers, he derived his entire income from public appearances, and from developments and improvements he made from time to time, for which his backers put up the necessary funds and provided materials.

With his concept of energy phenomenon, had he worked as hard as he pretended to, he might have actually developed some very effective machines, though not producing more energy than was put into them, might have greatly advanced industry by reason of more efficient machines and methods.

He might have done great work in furthering the advance of railroad equipment, which only today has begun to use compressed air to a great degree, and very successfully.

His theories on atomic structure might have led him to new scientific concepts of the atom, had he experimented further. But he seemed content with using his obvious knowledge only to the extent of continuing his hoax, and making a very easy living from it.

Keely's deception was perhaps the greatest of all time, in its extreme duration, and the completeness with which he duped all investigators. He was undoubtedly extremely clever, and possessed a glibness unsurpassed by any hoaxer before or after him. However, were he alive today, he might be surprised to see that science has begun to seriously work on machines which may actually work out his hoax in reality.



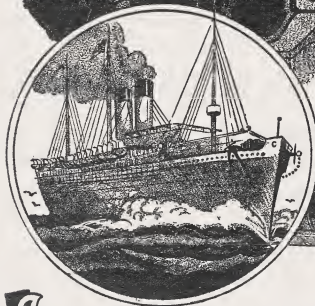
# Fantastic

*John Worrell Keely*

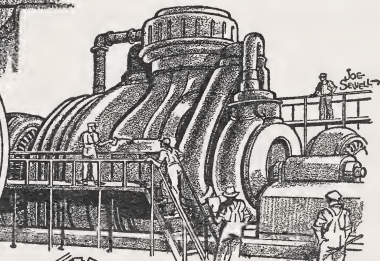
SCIENCE-FICTION SCIENTIST  
WHO SUCCESSFULLY  
DUPED THE WORLD FOR  
25 YEARS WITH A MACHINE  
THAT APPARENTLY SUPPLIED  
MORE ENERGY THAN  
WAS PUT INTO IT



USING POWER OBTAINED FROM  
A PINT OF WATER, POURED INTO  
A CYLINDER, KEELY GENERATED  
POWER WHICH REGISTERED 50,000  
LBS. PER SQUARE INCH, AND TORE  
CABLES APART WITH EASE.



IT WAS KEELY'S CLAIM THAT HIS  
GENERATOR COULD GET ENOUGH POWER  
FROM A QUART OF WATER TO DRIVE A  
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KEELY FELL FAR SHORT OF THE REAL  
POSSIBILITIES IN ATOMIC POWER.  
SCIENCE NOW PREDICTS MARVELS  
THAT FAR OVERSHADOW THE IMAGINATION  
OF THIS 19TH CENTURY FAKER...  
KEELY'S GENERATOR WAS A  
HOAX, RUN BY SECRET  
COMPRESSED AIR SOURCES.

# hoaxes

By JULIUS SCHWARTZ

**Never in history has a hoax been so successfully perpetrated on the public, as the now famous hoax of John Worrel Keely, who claimed to have found the secret of multiplying energy by atomic vibration**

ILLUSTRATED BY JOE SEWELL

**I**N 1872 John Worrell Keely induced a number of capitalists to finance his experiments in perfecting a machine which he claimed would supply more energy than was put into it.

After spending two years on the invention Keely took it out on a wide lecture tour. And for twenty-five years this fake duped the public which crowded his lecture hall each time he appeared.

Keely, strange to say, had an idea that was startlingly correct. Briefly, he sought to cause all the atoms of a piece of matter to vibrate together in unison, in phase, not haphazardly as they do. Thereby he expected to arrange them into new, more compact forms, and to release some of the energy within. It is evident that Keely, in his discussions of the vibrations of atoms, was anticipating the very phenomenon connected with wireless signaling. And all this occurred long before Marconi's first experiments!

A peculiar feature of the invention was a series of tuning forks, with the vibrations of which Keely claimed to disintegrate air and release an etheric force capable of rivaling a cyclone in strength if properly utilized and applied.

Keely's imagination was on a par with that of any modern science-fiction author. His machine, among other names, was called "a hydro-pneumatic-pulsating-vacuum-engine," and among the newly invented technical terms which flowed from his lips were "etheric disintegration," "quadruple negative harmonics," and "atomic triplets."

The demonstrations were highly successful. A pint of water and a few foot-pounds of energy would supply sufficient force to break iron bars, crush rock, produce tremendous pressures, and do other tasks usually requiring thousands of foot-pounds of energy.

In explanation of what one visitor saw upon one occasion, this individual said that a pint of water poured into a cylinder seemed to work great wonders. The gage showed a pressure of more than 50,000 pounds to the square inch. Great ropes were torn apart, iron bars broken in two or twisted out of shape, bullets discharged through 12 inch planks.

In the glory of his exuberance, Keely now declared that with one quart of water he would be able to send a train of cars from Philadelphia to San Francisco, and that to propel a steamship from New York to Liverpool and return, would require just about a gallon of water. (Today it is estimated that if the hydrogen of only one quart of water were converted to helium, there would be enough energy

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# CITY UNDER THE SEA

By NAT SCHACHNER

## CHAPTER I

### The Sinking of the Oceanic

THE girl in the reception room of the Van Dine Lines said: "Mr. Van Dine is busy in conference just now, Mr. Martin."

"What of it?" I retorted coolly, and swung the latched gate open with the ball of my thumb. As I eased my short, rather chunky body through, I inquired impolitely over my shoulder: "Playing solitaire with himself, eh?"

It was notorious that young Gerry Van Dine, christened Gerald, was the most reluctant third vice-president the famous Van Dine lines ever had. He would much rather be up at his private shipyard at City Island, clad in old dungarees, engaged in putting the last finishing touches to the special depth submarine he had invented. But his father, Howard Van Dine, was fast reaching the age of retirement, and insisted that his son spend a reasonable amount of time at the offices of the great steamship line to which he was heir.

The girl protested with a faint smile. "Not this time, Mr. Martin. He's in conference with his father."

"That's fine," I said and kept on walking. "I'll see 'em both, and kill two birds with one visit."

The girl shrugged her shapely shoulders and turned back to her desk. She was used to my little ways. Hell, a man has some rights, if he's known the Van Dines, father, and son, as long as I have! Gerry and I had chummed and fought together since boyhood; we had galloped simultaneously through Sheff Scientific; we had loved the same girl. But here there had been no dead heat. Gerry, with his two-headed blondness and infectious grin, had won by a nose. Well, I was resigned to that by now. I hadn't really expected Marion to fall for my homely and undistinguished phiz. As a matter of fact, I was to be best man at the wedding.

I turned the knob of the door marked *Private*, and entered unceremoniously.

"Hello, Mr. Van Dine. Hello Gerry. How's the

How could a giant ocean liner  
sink in a calm, without survivors?  
Gerry Van Dine and his best friend,  
Kemp Martin went down into  
the depths to find—a weird city!

prospective bridegroom, you undeserving scoundrel?"

I stopped short. The two men had swerved in their chairs at my gusty entrance. Howard Van Dine, with his fine, aristocratic face and thin, high-bridged nose. Gerry, young, well put together, irregularly featured, yet wholeheartedly handsome when his famous grin lit up. But there was no hint of merriment in the blank, tragic stare that both of them turned my way. Gerry's face was white with repression, his blue eyes smoldering embers. Mr. Van Dine, Sr.'s nose was twitching slightly, always a sign of trouble. He held a thin slip of blue and white paper in his hand, and his hand trembled uncontrollably. Neither of them spoke.

"Sorry," I muttered, and felt behind me for the knob.

Gerry seemed to come out of his trance. "Don't go, Kemp," he said in a hard, dry voice. "I may need you."

I paused in midflight, looking from one to the other.

"What's wrong?"

"The *Oceanic* went down this morning with all on board."

"Good Lord," I ejaculated. "That's the third of your boats in a month."

Mr. Van Dine nodded jerkily. His nose was twitching violently now. "Yes," he said, "same place too."

It stunned me. What strange fatality was overtaking the Van Dine Lines? I remembered the sensation the other two sinkings had caused. Now the *Oceanic*! All three crack liners, all New York bound from London, and all disappearing without a trace, without a clue as to what had happened, not fifty miles out of New York harbor, just where the continental shelf drops suddenly into the depths.

Mr. Van Dine held up the fluttering slip of paper. It was a radiogram. "Just received this from the destroyer *Erebus*. They heard a single SOS, giving name and position. The wireless stopped suddenly, in the middle of a word. The *Erebus* got to the given position an hour later, and found loose gear floating





Swiftly the fish-man swept down to attack



around, some oil. Nothing else."

He stopped, his eyes shifting to avoid mine. Gerry said nothing, but the bones of his face showed white through the tight-drawn skin.

I glanced keenly from one to the other. "Out with it," I snapped. "You're holding out on me."

"Yes," Gerry's voice was barely audible. "Marion was on the *Oceanic*."

I STOOD there gaping like a fish, my heart turning sickening flip-flops within my breast. Marion Dale—lovely, slim, with her clear, golden-tanned skin and merry laugh, and those green-flecked hazel eyes of hers that looked so frankly out upon a sun-shiny world—Marion—dead! Gerry and I had both loved her and Gerry had won, and I was to be best man. Marion—dead!

"B-but," I stammered inanely, "she wasn't due till next week. Her passage was booked on the *Atlantic*, wasn't it?"

Gerry smiled bitterly, a smile that was frozen with agony. "She cabled she was changing over. Wanted the thrill of being on one of *our* liners."

Then he broke. His head went into his hands and great dry sobs shook him. Mr. Van Dine put his arm around his son's shoulders. "Take it easy, my boy," he warned.

Gerry shook off the restraining hand gently, rose to his full six feet. His eyes were blazing cold, the muscles of his jaw were set in hard ridges.

"I'm taking the *Sea Scorpion* out this afternoon."

The *Sea Scorpion* was his submarine, the second he had built. Planned for submergence to greater depths than had ever been possible before.

I looked at him blankly. "What for?" I asked feebly.

"What for?" he echoed harshly. "Do you think those boats sank of themselves? In a sea that was smooth as a pond, without a hatful of breeze stirring? At almost exactly the same spot and under the same circumstances? There's something damnably wrong out there, and I'm going to find out what it is, if it's the last thing I do on earth. I don't give a hoot about the ships, that's only money; but there were thousands of people who weren't given a chance, and there was—Marion."

His father lifted his head suddenly. "Gerry—I wonder if you know that all three boats were carrying secret shipments of gold bars, some ten millions worth?"

Gerry nodded silently.

"But damn it, man," I cried almost angrily. "You can't take the *Sea Scorpion* out by yourself. You need a crew for one thing, and it's too small, for another. Now if the *Sea Squid* hadn't gone down . . ."

"Yes," he interrupted softly. "But the *Sea Squid* sank almost six months ago, and do you know where? I'll tell you. It was almost exactly at the same spot, and in *exactly* the same way. A sudden cry for help

from Garlon Petrie, and then the wireless went blank. Nothing to show after except some oil floating on the surface."

"I didn't know that," I told him. I had been away building a railroad in Bolivia when it had happened. Trying to forget about Marion, too.

"Poor Garlon," said Gerry. "He was the first to get smashed by the menace. I could have used him now."

That made me really angry. Of course, Garlon Petrie was a great engineer, a genius almost. He and Gerry had worked together on the depth submarine. Neither could have finished it without the other; their ideas dovetailed nicely. And Gerry's money backed them to the limit. But I never had liked the man. He was a sallow skinned individual, with smoldering, secretive eyes and straight, coarse black hair. His thin lips were always tightly compressed as though eternally withholding some secret.

When the *Sea Squid* had been finally completed, ready for a test, Gerry was down with a bad case of grippe. It devolved upon Garlon to try her out. He assembled a crew, slipped out of the ways, and went out to sea. At fifty miles out he was going to submerge, he had announced, and try for record depths. That was the last ever seen of the craft. A short frantic SOS, followed by silence!

It had been a great blow to Gerry. But immediately upon his recovery, he had shaken his head grimly, and plunged into the construction of another submarine, alone. Much smaller this one, for he was gambling—gambling that the *Sea Squid* had not sunk because of fundamental errors in construction.

"Garlon knew submarines, I grant you," I said heatedly, "but that doesn't mean I'm not as good as that fish-faced guy any day. What do you mean you could have used him? I'm here, am I not? And what's more, Gerald Van Dine," I shook a finger under his nose, "I'm going with you, whether you like it or not. I—I was rather fond of Marion," I ended inanely.

Gerry's features softened. "I know you were, Kemp," he answered, gripping me by the shoulder. "And you *are* coming. I couldn't have a better man along."

All taffy of course, but it makes a man feel good even when he knows it's not true.

Mr. Van Dine was standing now, looking sharply at us. His nose twitched violently, but his voice was steady. "God knows on what sort of a wild goose chase you two are going. I ought to forbid it, but I can't. Only promise that you won't take any undue chances. If you find anything wrong, radio for assistance. I'll see to it there are destroyers standing by."

"We promise, dad."

THEN we were out of the office, with a hectic morning ahead. There were supplies to be purchased, tanks of compressed oxygen to be installed, batteries

to be tested, and all the little odds and ends to be performed on a boat, when outfitting for a long cruise. "We don't know where we're going, nor how long we'll be there," Gerry observed grimly.

But the Van Dine name was a talisman, the Van Dine millions a performer of miracles, and Gerry Van Dine a driving fount of energy. So that at two o'clock that afternoon, just four hours after we got started, the last bit of equipment had been carefully gone over, supplies had been stowed in ship-shape fashion, and the last of a small army of suddenly mobilized workmen was just as suddenly demobilized.

We were ready to go!

Gerry went over his craft with a sort of fierce pride, testing every last connection, every valve personally. Even back in Tech, submarines had been an obsession with him, and here was his dream in the flesh. I followed him around, staring meekly. I had never seen the boat before. My engineering knack ran to railroads and bridges; I knew nothing of ships in any form, but even my untrained eyes disclosed to me that this was a novel underwater craft.

It was fish-shaped, gracefully streamlined, and tapering to long blunt-nosed rams at either end. The hull and superstructure were of beryllium-steel, immensely thick. The internal combustion engines were miracles of compactness and driving energy and had been adapted to underwater propulsion. Gerry had very cleverly evolved an exhaust system to lead the gases of combustion into the ballast tanks, where they were harmlessly dissipated. Accordingly, there were no storage batteries.

The hydroplane vanes too, were peculiarly curved, not flat as was customary. Gerry explained that they gave better stability of control. The submarine was equipped to the last detail. Powerful searchlights of Gerry's own invention that could cut the water for considerable distances, special sono-devices, ejector tube with airlock, oxygenation apparatus that could keep the interior sweet and clean for over two weeks, rigid diver's suits of beryllium-steel, built to withstand tremendous pressures, with oxygen tanks and compact communication units for underwater use.

The whole craft was small, hardly more than a model. The tiny cubbyhole within could accommodate at the most, three persons; yet it looked thoroughly staunch and seaworthy.

I shrugged my shoulders, concealed whatever misgivings I had and said: "Let's go."

"Right," said Gerry, and herded me inside. The hatch to the tiny deck clamped to overhead.

THE sub was already off the ways, floating free in thirty feet of water. Gerry did things to the engine, and it sprang into instant, purring life. Then he turned valves. There was a hiss of intruding waters. The ballast tanks were filling. I had an odd sensation that we were sinking, yet so smooth was our descent that I couldn't trace it to anything in particular.

Gerry watched his depth meter. At twenty feet, he held the sub steady. Then we started. No one had seen us submerge; no one knew our destination.

At dusk of that midsummer day we reached the place, almost fifty miles out. The little sub was functioning perfectly.

We came to the surface then to get our bearings. I stepped out on the tiny deck eagerly. Who knew, it might be the last sight I would ever have of sun and sky and clean sweet air.

The deck was awash with the great regular rollers of the interminable ocean. A narrow horizon circumscribed our view. A westering sun was plunging into the heaving depths. All around us floated bits of wood, spars, coiling ropes, tackle blocks, flotsam and jetsam of a wreck. The surface of the water was slimy with oil.

Gerry's face hardened. There was no doubt we were directly at the spot where the *Oceanic* had taken her tragic plunge into the depths.

"What do we do now?" I asked.

"We're going down to find her," his voice was harsh with pain. "I want to know what happened, and I want to find—"

"Yes, of course," I interposed hastily, and shuddered. A drowned body is not pleasant to look at, especially if fish had gotten at it. "But there's a depth of several hundred fathoms here. No sub has ever gone down that far."

"This one will," he retorted confidently. "I built her for just that."

I looked around a last time. A black smudge came crawling over the horizon, trailing long streamers of smoke.

"A destroyer," said Gerry, shading his eyes. "Below, Kemp. We're submerging at once."

Once more I heard the clang of doom over my head as the hatches clamped to. Then we were sinking with a rush. The searchlights sprang into illumination. Their spreading rays lit up the still, black waters, brought the images back to ground glass visors.

Already we were down two hundred feet, and still sinking steadily, though the speed of our descent had slackened. Small wavering shapes floated by on the visors—fish. Not many though. The depths of the ocean seemed deserted, black with eternal midnight, sinister.

A huge black mass drifted into the vision, a thing of waving slimy arms. A round fierce eye stared at us unwinking, balefully. Then it was gone.

"Octopus," said Gerry briefly.

And still we sank. Three hundred, four hundred, five hundred feet. No sub had ever gone down so far. I looked anxiously about. The pressure must be terrific. Half fearfully, I watched for sprung plates, tiny leaks that would widen into overwhelming Niagaras. But everything was intact, sound. The engines purred their sturdy song. Gerry was stony-faced, immobile, watching with fierce intensity only one visor—that

which reflected the depth searchlight.

Six hundred feet down now, our depth meter showed, and the visor reflected far below an interminable solid stretch. The bottom of the ocean. Thick, primordial ooze it seemed, the detritus of uncounted ages. It was flat, flat as a Kansas prairie, but at one end there appeared the beginning of a regular upward swelling. The screen cut off the rest of it.

"Look, Gerry," I said. "That's funny. Turn the searchlight over to the left. I want to—"

That was as far as I got. For on the farther side came heaving into view sharp angles and jutting black fingers—the unmistakable outlines of a huge liner. It was the *Oceanic*, in her last tragic resting place. We had reached the end of our quest.

## CHAPTER II

### On the Ocean Floor

THE *Sea Scorpion* settled gently down into the ooze, close to the towering bulk of the great liner. A tomb—a thing of steel and wood and the already rotting flesh of over two thousand beings who had only that morning lived and breathed and loved.

Gerry's voice came to me, staccato, hard.

"Into the diving suit, Kemp."

In a daze I obeyed; pouring my chunky body into its unyielding mold with much grunting and labored breathing, admiring the swift, effortless movements of my companion. Last came the helmets, great globular beryllium-steel and quartz affairs, with a compact oxygen-release tank nestling not too comfortably against the back of my head. We helped each other screw the things into place.

Without a word we stepped into the ejector-lock, heard the slide hiss to behind us. Gerry turned a valve and water started gushing in. It filled rapidly. Then a final flip and the door to the unknown opened. We stepped out together. The flashes, set in our helmets like miner's torches, sent elongated cones of light stabbing into the depths. Our weighted feet sank heavily into the soft, porous ooze. All about us, outside the thin illumination of our flashes, was blackness; profound, inky almost physical blackness. No least ray of the sun filtered down to these tremendous depths.

We plodded forward, dragging our legs through the slime. Ahead, and as far up as our flashes could carry, loomed the giant bulk of the *Oceanic*, already settled into the soft muck. What was waiting for us in these sinister depths? The black, still reaches held some terrible secret. No fish swam into our range of illumination, no sign of life whatever. The appalling gloom was deserted.

An uneasy feeling that we were being followed held me. Several times I turned quickly. The stabbing beam disclosed nothing. But again and again I turned; I almost felt the impact of invisible eyes

focused on the back of my head. Once I thought I caught a fleeting glimpse of a black shape slipping out of the wavering edge of illumination.

Gerry trudged ahead, eyes always to the front, where the *Oceanic* lay. I said nothing of my fears.

Now we were right under the exposed, overarching bow. An exclamation from Gerry came to me through the tiny receiving unit in my helmet. I stopped horrified. We knew now how the great liner had been sunk. A huge, ragged tear showed its gaping maw in the hull. The thick steel plates had been literally shattered to pieces by the force of the explosion. A powerful submarine mine had done the trick.

"I thought, as much," I heard Gerry's voice, metallic and harsh, through the communication unit. "The *Oceanic* was the victim of a man-made catastrophe. That mine was fastened to the bottom of the ship, and exploded. It could never have done such damage otherwise."

I was bewildered, stunned, at the confirmation of my nebulous ideas.

"Who could have done this?" I asked craftily. "And why?"

"The *why* is easy. They were after the gold. The *who* is what I'm going to find out. It's a submarine all right, and one that has all our ideas too. Poor Garlon must have blundered into him and died for it."

I kept my counsel. "Let's look inside," I suggested. "Maybe we can find a clue in there."

I didn't like the place where we were standing. I could have sworn that we were being watched, weighed, by invisible things all around us. Yet whenever I stabbed suddenly with my beam, nothing showed—nothing but wastes of water, pressing down upon us with terrific force. I would feel better inside the ship, where I could see what I was up against.

"Very well," said Gerry, and we stepped into the gashed bowels of the ship. We climbed cautiously up and up, through the piled-up wreckage of the hold, past the engine room, shuddered away from contact with lolling smashed-in bodies whose faces were sodden, unrecognizable pulps.

Gerry knew the *Oceanic* well. He finally reached his destination—the steel-lined treasure room. Then he swore, deeply. A section of the steel door had been neatly cut out, and the beams of light that we threw into the dank interior disclosed its emptiness. The treasure of gold bars—ten million dollars' worth—was gone.

"Stolen!"

"And here are the thieves," I cried, as I jerked around swiftly. I caught a glimpse of a figure, snatched at my knife, and struck out with an unwieldy arm.

MORE figures shot into the illumination out of nowhere and came at me with a smooth, graceful rush. I went down in a smother of clinging bodies. I heard a gasp of surprise from Gerry, and then I was

fighting for my life. I hit out with weighted legs and arms, but the pressure of the water took all the force out of my blows. I didn't have a chance. My antagonists, silent, swift, sure of themselves in these strange depths, had my arms pinioned in a trice. The electric torch in my helmet was smashed with a well directed blow. Blackness enveloped me. I struggled feebly. I was borne along, not knowing where I went. I thought I heard a faint far-off cry from Gerry; then there was only silence.

I shall never forget that nightmare journey. Pushed through unyielding darkness at the bottom of the ocean by invisible captors. The short glimpse I had had of them was fantastic, unbelievable. What were they?

After what seemed hours I felt myself coming to a halt. The creatures that held me fumbled with something. A rush of sucking waters swept me off my feet. I was carried along a short distance, and again motion ceased. Then I sensed rather than felt the lightening of pressure on the upper portion of my body, as though the waters were receding.

It flashed on me then. I was in a lock of sorts, the water was being pumped out. Was I about to be led into some strange civilization beneath the bed of old ocean? Possibly that peculiar, regular swelling to which I had tried to call Gerry's attention was the roof.

More fumbling. Then a huge panel slid open in front of me. A wave of illumination beat in suddenly upon my dazzled eyes. Numerous hands had urged me through.

I was standing at the edge of a city of irregularly scattered mud hovels, shaped exactly like beehives. The whole of this interior world was circular, not over a mile in diameter, and over-arched by a soaring rocky dome. The ceiling rock gleamed with golden pin-points of light that furnished an even illumination. Doubtless the rock was highly radioactive.

But it was the first full sight of my captors that evoked my utmost astonishment. There were a half dozen of them. They were *men*, but strange, fantastic. Their skins were olive-green and supple-leathered like the skin of a shark. Their heads were elongated like fish-heads, with mouths that were straight gashes, and peculiar feathered openings on either cheekbone. Gills slits. Their hands and feet had strong, webbed membranes between the fingers and toes.

These were not fishes who somehow had grown into the semblance of men; rather they were men who had degenerated into fish. It was evident too that they were equally at home in water and out.

Then my attention was distracted by a commotion in back of me. The next moment Gerry was catapulted from the lock into our midst, grotesque in his huge suit, lashing out with weighted hands and feet at a clinging dozen of these strange denizens of the deep.

The fightingest fool that ever was. I grinned and

yelled within my helmet. "Stop scrapping, you idiot. You're only making it tougher for me."

He struggled upright with a heave of his armored shoulders that sent the whole dozen flying in all directions. I could hear his joyful whoop as his goggled eyes glared blankly in my direction.

"Kemp, you old son," he shouted. "I thought they had killed you."

"I'm too tough," I said, "but there comes the leader. He's saying things; but I can't hear him."

Sure enough, the tallest of my captors had approached me; his straight gash of a mouth gulping peculiarly, his webbed arms gesticulating. I looked at him puzzled. Then it dawned on me.

"He wants us to take off our suits, Gerry," I yelled in the transmitter. "Think it wise?"

He grunted. "Must be air in here. They seemed to be breathing. We've got to take the chance anyway; our oxygen can't last much longer."

"O. K." We edged heavily over to each other, the suits dragging us down with their weight. The fish-men, or men-fish, made way for us. I worked clumsily at Gerry's helmet; he reciprocated with mine. Very cautiously we lifted them, ready to clamp down again if there were no breathable air; but the first gulp satisfied me. It was rather heavy and saturated, but it would do.

Gerry stared at me whimsically. "What's next?" "They seem to know," I said. The fish-men were pointing to a mud hovel that towered over the others, and were unmistakably gesturing that there was our destination.

"All right," said Gerry, "take us there."

Their leader scowled ferociously.

"You follow me." That was all he said, but if it had been an explosion we could not have jumped more. He had spoken in English!

"Listen, fellow," I cried, after I had caught my breath, "where did you learn that?"

"Me know plenty" he answered surlily. "You come see Emperor; me no talk to you."

"Nice, pleasant chap," I commented. Gerry took a step forward, his face black with anger. Instantly the leader whistled peculiarly. A dozen fish-men threw themselves on us. Their webbed fingers contacted with our bare heads before we could move in our weighted suits. A paralyzing vibration passed through my body, leaving me rigid, helpless. Our fish-men were electric too!

We were unceremoniously picked up and carted along on the shoulders of these underocean denizens as though we were mummies. We soon reached the entrance to the large structure that was our destination. It was made of smooth, yellow clay, about thirty feet in diameter, and tapering to a point the same distance up. I was pushed through the narrow opening and deposited upright, Gerry next to me in the middle of the huge clay chamber. We were rigid in every limb.

At the farther end stood a group. My eyes focused



on them unbelievably. I had suspected something, but this was incredible. Seven men, earth-men, dressed in normal earthclothes, were grinning evilly at us.

### CHAPTER III

#### Garlon Petrie Again

"GARLON PETRIE!" The name tore rasping out of Gerry's throat.

I disregarded the other six, who were the usual run of savage, furtive-eyed rascals who can be picked up in the dives of any big city to cut a throat for a ten dollar bill, and fastened my gaze upon the tall, sallow, black-haired man with the thin compressed lips.

He leaned forward a little and smiled. Not with his lips—those seemed to remain eternally shut even when he talked—but with a twitch of his sallow cheeks that made it into an evil grimace.

"Yes," he said softly, "Garlon Petrie himself. You are surprised, my friend?"

Gerry had gone white at the first sight of his former co-worker; now the red flooded suddenly into his cheeks. His blue eyes burned with strange flames. He tried to throw himself forward, but the paralysis held us tight in its grip.

"Garlon Petrie!" Strange how deadlly cold his voice was. "The man I trusted. I see it all now. You used my money, my ideas, for your own ends. This devil's work is all of your making."

"Correct in every detail," the sallow man bowed mockingly. "Except that your ideas were very commonplace; I did not need them. Your money, yes. Did you think," his voice rose with sudden passion, "I was content to complete this brain child of mine, this submarine, and stand by to see it used by others, with merely a thanks to me?" His eyes glittered. "No, my friend, I had a definite goal in mind. The wealth of the world, power; that's what I want, and what I am going to get with this toy." His long, talon-like fingers curved inward as if he already had the world by the throat.

"Your illness was a lucky break. I picked my crew carefully." He waved a hand at the glowering cutthroats at his back. "I picked the spot to disappear, sent out an SOS to give the idea I had met with an accident. It was my intention to work back to shore under water to a place I had prepared, and use that as a base for operations."

His eyes smoldered on the surly fish-men who stood apart. "I found these animals, ripped a few of them apart with torpedoes. The rest yielded quickly enough." He laughed throatily. It seemed I detected a flare of hate in the fish-men's eyes. "I'm Emperor here. This is a much better base to work from. Every ship that sails the ocean shall pay me tribute, or sink. I've already shown what I can do."

Gerry was white again. "I do not mind the rotten

scurvy trick you played me. I do not mind the loss of my money and ships. But you went further. You destroyed the lives of thousands of innocent people, and among them," his face was set and terrible, "was the girl I loved."

Garlon chuckled nastily. "Ah yes, the very delightful Marion Dale. A most delicate morsel. I myself admired her immensely, and wondered what she saw in your gross, overgrown beef."

Gerry spoke low. "You have said enough, Garlon. I shall kill you for this."

Two spots of red burned in the man's sallow cheeks. Gerry had finally gotten under his skin. He took a short step forward and hit Gerry hard with the flat of his hand. "For that you die tomorrow. It won't be an easy death either. And Marion shall see you die."

"Marion." The exclamation came simultaneously from both our throats. "She's alive!"

"Of course," Garlon was enjoying himself. "I knew she was on the *Oceanic* just as I knew there was gold on board. I have sources for obtaining information. While the boat was sinking, I climbed on board, unnoticed in the confusion, brought her back to the submarine. Shall I show her to you?"

WITHOUT waiting for a reply, he uttered a sharp command to the leader of the fish-men. "Ugru, bring the girl here."

Ugru salaamed sullenly and went out. My heart was bounding. Marion alive, Ugru and the fish-men manifestly disaffected, hating their conquerors. My brain teemed, while my body was rigid as ever in the paralysis. Gerry's face was ablaze; but he said nothing.

A padding of feet at the door. I tried to twist my head and could not. Then a girl was brought forward, held firmly by Ugru. It was Marion, lovely and slim as ever, but looking white and worn. Yet her proud little head was held high. She gazed up at Garlon's cold, cruel eyes fearlessly.

His features twisted. "Look behind you," he told her. "Some friends of yours who haven't long to live."

At a gesture, Ugru pivoted her around. Then she saw the two of us, rigid, paralyzed, with our hearts shining nakedly in our eyes.

The girl's startled eyes passed me by unseeing, fastened themselves with desperate eagerness upon Gerry. A flame leaped and as quickly died.

"Gerry, darling, you—here!"

He was looking on her as one resurrected from the dead. "Yes, dear. And now that I know you are alive, nothing can stop us."

"Say Chief, let me burn him now." One of the gutter rats in the background had stepped forward, his beady eyes glittering with coke, a bluenosed automatic thrusting in his hand.

Petrie waved him back without taking his eyes off Gerry.

"Shut up, Spike," he said. "He dies tomorrow, and the way I want."

Horror sprang into the girl's face. "No! No!" she panted.

Petrie snarled like a fanged wolf about to strike. "He dies. He has discovered my secret; he stands in my way with you." His tone changed. "Enough, I have had my sport. I am weary of you now." He clapped his hands. "Strip off their suits, Ugru; they won't need them any more. Keep them paralyzed and under guard. Your life shall answer if they escape."

Ugru salaamed deeply. Underneath his veiled eyes I noted again, this time quite plainly, the welling hatred of the conquered.

Webbed hands lifted us out of our diver's suits, left us in our stercor clothes.

"As for you, my Marion," Petrie smiled crookedly at her, "from now on you shall be guarded by my own men. I don't trust the Keras. They're fish, but still men."

Spike sprang forward eagerly. "I'll watch her for you, Chief."

Garlon thrust him back with a careless hand. "I don't trust you either. You keep away from the girl, d'ye hear?"

Spike's face wreathed into a look of animal rage, but his voice was placating. "Aw, Chief," he whined, "I didn't mean nothing."

"You had better not. She's not for you and the sooner you find that out, the better off you'll be. Red, you go with her, and remember what I told Spike."

"O. K., Chief." A brutal faced thug shambled forward, his long, hairy arms gangling like an ape's, his unkempt hair and beard fiery red.

The last I saw as Gerry and I were hurried urgently out of the room, rigid on the shoulders of the fish-men, was Marion crouching away from Red's grip, and the look compounded of lust and hatred on Spike's face.

OUR prison was not far away. We were dumped unceremoniously into the interior of a smaller building, and stood up against the clay wall at an angle as though we were wax figures. Ugru sat himself down next to us, his eyes sullen, but watchful. Outside the open door, I saw two other of the Keras range themselves. We were well guarded.

"Kemp." Gerry was speaking softly.

"Yes?"

"*Parle Francais. Cet homme de poisson ne comprend pas.*" (Speak in French. The fish-man won't understand.)

"Oui."

Ugru watched us suspiciously. It was obvious he did not understand this gibberish.

"Can you move at all?"

"Not the slightest," I confessed, "though I've been trying hard enough."

"Listen," Gerry talked rapidly. "Ugru must know

a way out. He has no cause to love Petrie and his band of cutthroats. Maybe he will help us."

"I've been thinking along the same lines," I admitted.

Gerry turned his eyes on the blank-faced Kera. "You do not like the Emperor?" he asked softly, in English.

The fish-man's eyes flashed with swift hatred; then clouded in startled terror. "No, no! Me do. You shut up."

Gerry pressed his advantage. "No, you don't. I saw it, and I don't blame you. He has conquered your people; he has made slaves out of them."

Again that flash of hatred, again the swift filming into terror. Ugru cast an uneasy glance at the guards outside the entrance. "You crazy. He good man. You shut up or I kill."

Gerry lowered his voice, went on persuasively. "You need not be afraid of us. We hate him more than you do. He has killed my people from the great world outside, he has stolen my girl. Help us get free, and we will help you get free. You can once more rule your own kind down here without interference."

It was a chance shot, but from the way Ugru's head lifted and his eyes flashed, it was evident that it had struck home. Ugru had been *Emperor* before the coming of Petrie!

Gerry went on as though he had not noticed. "When we go away from here, we shall forget that we ever found this place. No other people from the great air-world shall come down to molest you."

Ugru looked at him fearfully, yet with dawning hope. Gerry's voice had rung with sincerity, his face was candid and frank. I watched the struggle going on in the fish-man with a fierce eagerness. On the outcome of that struggle depended all our lives. Fear of the stranger Petrie and his cohorts, with their terrible weapons—torpedoes, automatics, hand grenades; against which the Keras had only their paralyzing touch, effective only on actual contact.

AT last Ugru came cautiously to his feet. The Emperor in him had won against the frightened savage. "Me help you," he said passionately. "Me help kill new Emperor. We old people, very old. Once we live in air world like you. Then storms come. Island covered with water. Not much. People learn to swim; live in water well as air. Then more storms come. Island sink altogether bottom ocean. Most people drowned. Some learned already live like fish. Ocean sink deeper and deeper, slow. Old people find this place; live here ever since. Me, Emperor." He beat his breast proudly. "Everything good, till new Emperor come. Kill lots people; take my place."

Gerry and I stared at each other.

"Good Lord," I said, "Then the legend of *Atlantis* was true after all!"

But Gerry was already talking to the Kera. "We'll

help you get all that back. Listen, Ugru, can you release us from this paralysis?"

The fish-man came to himself with a start. He nodded, approached us. His webbed hand caressed the rigid backs of our heads, each in turn. I felt a flow of warmth careening through me. I essayed gingerly to move a leg; exclaimed joyfully as it shifted its position.

We worked our limbs vigorously until circulation was fully restored. Gerry wasted no time. "We'll have to move rapidly. Find Marion, and escape."

I waxed sarcastic. "How, may I ask? We're not Keras to swim out at the bottom of the ocean."

Gerry looked blank. "I forgot about that." Our suits were in the building where Petrie and his men were. Then his face set grimly. "We'll rush them."

"With bare hands against automatics?" I argued. "No sir, leave me out of that picture. Besides, even if we got them, how would we find the *Sea Scorpion*? We don't even know in what direction it is."

"I have it," Gerry grinned. "*The Sea Squid*."

"Fine," I agreed heartily, "but where is it?"

"I'll find out. Ugru, where does the Emperor keep the boat he came in?"

"Emperor he keep it over there." A sweeping gesture showed the general direction.

"Is there a lock there also?"

"Yes, yes. He big one. Boat fit in."

"Splendid. Let's get started." Gerry started for the door.

"No," Ugru held him with a detaining hand. "Get killed. Wait dark."

"Dark?" Gerry echoed in surprise. "You mean to say you have nights down here?"

Ugru shrugged. "No understand, night. Emperor, he no like all time light. Do something make black; everyone go to sleep."

"A new wrinkle," said Gerry with grudging admiration. "The scoundrel is a genius. Must be blanketing the radio-active emanations with some sort of wave screen. Well, we'll wait, though it's hard."

"Come soon," said Ugru, and glided out of the hut to the guards. We heard them in rapid, hissing converse; then he was back, smiling as broadly as his thin gash of a mouth would permit.

"Kera happy," he announced. "One go tell other Kera; they help. Other stay with us."

## CHAPTER IV

### Battle on the Sea Floor

THE next two hours seemed centuries, yet they ended finally. It became dark; swiftly, suddenly, like a tropical sunset. We could not see each other; it was so inky.

"Now," whispered Gerry, groping toward me.

"Not yet," Ugru's voice came out of the blackness firmly. "They go sleep first. Lie down, shut eyes, look dead." His tone conveyed withering contempt.

Evidently in the course of what might be termed evolution, these Keras who once were men had dispensed with the art of sleeping.

Again we had to acknowledge the logic of his reasoning. We waited again. We had no weapons! To all our inquiries Ugru had shaken his head. There was no wood in this underground cave of ocean; not even a stone. The ground was silt hardened to clay, smooth and bare. I confess I did not relish the prospect; fists against bullets; but Gerry seemed to anticipate the coming fray with a good deal of enjoyment.

At last Ugru hissed to us. It was time! We rose and stealthily edged our way out of the building. The other guard had gone to join his comrades. Our eyes tried vainly to pierce the impenetrable dark. Ugru had no difficulty; he was accustomed to the sunless depths of the sea. We went along in line, Gerry's outstretched fingertips resting in the small of the fish-man's back, and mine on Gerry's.

Our plan of action had been carefully mapped. First we were going to the building in which Marion was captive; overpower her guard. Then on to Petrie and his cohorts. The Keras—there were only some half thousand left in their degraded state—were massing silently in a cordon around the Emperor's structure. At a signal we were to rush the place, ourselves in the van. The Keras had a wholesome respect for the weapons of the white men.

Through the profound dark we crept, following Ugru's unerring course. A silence as dense as the night enveloped us; not a light glimmered. My heart was pounding away; we were approaching the climax of our mad adventure.

Suddenly I bumped headlong into Gerry. He had stopped short.

"What the—" I commenced angrily.

"Sssh," he whispered. "Look."

Ahead of us and a little to the left, I caught a thin flicker of light. Then it was gone. Two seconds passed, and the pencil of light gleamed momentarily on the ground some paces further on, and was out again, like a snuffed candle.

"What in the world can it be?" I asked softly.

Gerry's voice floated back. "Someone else is on the trail tonight. A human being too! A Kera wouldn't need a light. Doesn't want to be seen, either. Watch."

Several times the strange flash lit up the ground, and flicked out, moving steadily ahead of us.

Ugru was back with us now, hissing excitedly. "He one of Emperor's people. Going same place we go. Air generator place—where woman prisoner."

I clutched Gerry by the arm. "Come on; there'll be fireworks soon. I expected this." I literally dragged him along. Ugru followed. The intermittent, receding flash ahead was a sufficient guide. If only things broke right!

The light stopped short, went out.

I stopped also. "That must be the air generator building and Marion's prison," I whispered. "Walk softly."

Ugru led the way again. We made no sound as we tiptoed on the firm clay.

Ugru's webbed hand felt clammy against mine. "Stop."

A VOICE was calling, softly, not ten paces from where we crouched, shielded by the blackness.

"Red! Say, Red! Red, do you hear me?"

Silence, in which my heart thumped loud. Then a stirring within the hut, a sleepy grumbling, followed by a yawn.

"Red!"

More stirrings and yawns, then—muffled. "Who's there?"

"Sssh, it's me; Spike. I want to talk to ya."

Straining our ears, we heard a huge form lumber to its feet, move about.

"S a hell of a note. Can't ya let a fella sleep? Whatya want?"

"Listen, Red." Both figures were invisible, but we could hear plainly enough. "It's the girl. The Chief's keeping her fer hisself."

"What about it?" growled the other.

"Tain't fair. Me 'n you's as good as him. Let's cut in."

"Not fer me." Red was wide awake now. "He'd chop us down sure as shootin'."

"Naw he wouldn't. If he kicks, we'd get 'im first. Then we cud keep all the swag fer ourselves."

"No go," said Red positively. We would hear him shift his position, as though he had turned to re-enter the air generator building. "You're all hopped up, Spike. Go ta bed an' sleep it off."

"Ya damned yellabelly," Spike gritted. "I gave ya a chance; now take this."

We could hear a swish in the silence; a groan, a dull thud—and more silence!

"Now," I whispered, and started to run. But Gerry was already on his way. We dashed pellmell through the thick soft dark, heedless of obstacles, of anything except that we had to get there in time.

I crashed headlong into a wall. A terrified scream slashed through the night. Spike had found his prey. Heedless of gashed forehead, I whirled, slithered along the wall with groping fingers, trying to find the entrance. But Gerry beat me to it. His pounding feet had carried him straight. A whirlwind swept into the hovel, smacked squarely into invisible, struggling figures.

A startled oath ripped out, a grunt, and the crash of shots. By the time I was inside it was all over.

I saw the picture outlined in sharp shadows in the midst of weird machinery. I saw the gun Gerry held in one free hand. He'd snatched it from Red's body. The other arm enclosed protectively the slim form of Marion. On the ground, outstretched, groaning feebly, was Spike. Ugru peered in fearfully from the doorway, an unhuman note in the strange scene.

"Quick, we've got to get to Petrie," I snapped. "That shot must have wakened the whole place."

"Wait here, darling," Gerry whispered to Marion. "No." Her voice was low, but firm. "I'm going too."

"All right, all right," I cried impatiently. "If we don't hurry, we'll have no place to go." There's no sense in arguing with a woman.

We catapulted out of the building, Gerry leading the way with his flash. There was no sense in further concealment; Petrie must be awake and waiting.

But to our surprise, the darkness held thick and palpable; silence brooded with invisible wings. Not a sound, not a glimmer of light to show that anyone was stirring.

FOR the first time I felt afraid. The silence was ominous, frightening. Garlon Petrie had shown himself too clever, too resourceful, to be caught napping like any dull-witted fool. I did not like it. But we could not hold back now. The last desperate chance must be taken.

## CHAPTER V

### A Race Against Death

IT WAS a strange race through an inky smudge relieved only by the wavering flash ahead. Soft slitherings grew upon my straining ears; the pad of hundreds of webbed feet. I could not see them, but I knew the Keras were gathering. Every so often the thin flare caught a startled figure that weaved quickly back into the sheltering darkness. And ahead, invisible, silent, ominous, was the building in which Petrie and his scum were gathered. A strange race to the death in this strange underground world!

Gerry flicked the torch off. I could hear Marion's soft panting alongside of me. The blackness was even more intense for the loss of light.

Ugru whispered, "Emperor's place he right ahead."

We were in the midst of a sway of invisible figures, pushing, hissing eagerly, softly. The Keras!

"What do now?" Ugru was manifestly perplexed.

"I'm going first," said Gerry quietly. "When I shout have your people rush the place."

"No," Marion panted.

"I'm with you," I stated. It was suicide, but I couldn't let him down. A hand found mine somehow, and squeezed. I felt better then.

"Come on." We started forward, shouldering our way through the press.

A shriek of agony split the night, stopped us flat-footed. Gerry flashed his beam instantly, and swore. A Kera, more daring than the rest, had crept to the curved wall of the building, had touched it. He was down on the ground, writhing in awful pain. Petrie had wired the walls, and the juice was on.

Almost immediately the whole of that underground world dazzled into the glow of day. Sharp spitting explosions came to our stunned ears, followed by the terrible clatter of gigantic typewriters.



"Machine guns!" I gasped, and threw myself flat, pulling the others down with me. Even in my despair I could not refrain from admiration. Petrie had been prepared, waiting.

A storm of bullets swept the open ground, cut through the bewildered, milling Keras like great scythes. The poor underocean creatures broke under the frightful hail. The great clay plain was dotted with madly running fish-men, leaving a score behind who never would run again.

The firing ceased. Petrie appeared in the doorway, a smoking automatic in each hand. His sallow cheeks were aflame, his smoldering eyes scorched in their intensity.

"The slaves thought to catch me napping, did they?" his chuckle rasped. "That's a lesson they soon won't forget."

Gerry cursed and tried to rise.

I pulled him back forcibly. "You fool," I whispered sharply. "You'll be cut in two before you go a yard. Our only chance is playing dead, and trying for the sub later."

But it was too late. Petrie's sharp eyes had seen the movement. "Come out of there," he said levelling his guns.

"Now we'll have to run for it," I groaned. "Come on."

Four figures rose like ghosts from the bloody ground and ran, head down, scattering, away from the building. Ugru had stuck with us.

Petrie's guns flamed, but our sudden move had upset his aim. We were making good time when the gunmen inside opened up with everything they had. Death belched and whistled all about us. A high-powered bullet ripped through my thigh, another thudded in my shoulder. I staggered, and kept on. I could see a gash across Gerry's scalp. Marion was pale but unhurt. Ugru was in the van, leading us steadily through that hell toward the submarine.

A SUDDEN lull in the firing behind us, a shout. I looked back, saw Petrie and his men piling after us. They had sensed what we were about.

We put on an extra burst of speed. There was about three hundred yards between us now. The great rocky ceiling was curving low overhead. We were nearing the confines of the little world. Bullets began to zip around us, but the range was too great for accurate shooting. My eyes darted vainly along the sloping rock wall, seeking for some sign of an opening. There was none. Was Ugru leading us into a trap, I wondered? My perspiring hands clenched grimly as I ran. If he was . . .

But the fish-man padded unhesitatingly in front, straight for a smoother seeming section of rock. His webbed fingers slid along the edge where it joined the plain, fumbled in search. Behind came the gunmen, a compact little group, Petrie well in advance. They fired as they ran. Little spurts of clay kicked up around our feet, the rock chipped into flying frag-

ments. I could hear the whine of the missiles as they hissed past my ear. Only two hundred yards separated us now.

Yet Ugru still fumbled, at a loss. I looked wildly about for some weapon, anything to defend ourselves. There was nothing, not even a pebble. Gerry had faced around grimly, crouching as if ready to spring upon the advancing men with bare hands. Marion stood erect and white.

There was a shout of triumph from the gunmen as they saw our predicament. Petrie raised his gun and fired. Gerry staggered from a bullet in his shoulder. Only a hundred yards now.

"We're through," said Gerry quietly. "Afraid, darling?"

"No," she answered bravely. "Better this than remain in Petrie's hands."

I wasn't quite that noble. I didn't want to die! I whirled around to curse out Ugru, just as he hissed exultant syllables in his own tongue. A section of smooth rock was sliding into a hidden recess.

"It's open," I yelled insanely. The four of us tumbled through in a confused heap; the section slid to behind us just as some highly indignant gunmen let loose another fusillade. I felt the impact of a slug somewhere, but what was one more or less when I was already so well filled with lead.

We were in a roughly hollowed chamber, almost completely filled with a gigantic metal fish. The *Sea Squid*!

Gerry's eyes flamed at the sight of it. "I never thought to see here again," he exulted.

"And you won't see her much longer if you don't do something quick," I told him in disgust.

I could hear muffled thumpings from the other side of our rocky prison. It would take Petrie only a minute to find the trick slide.

Gerry snapped into command. "Kemp, you take Marion into the sub through that open ejector tube. Ugru, you let the waters in, quick. I'll try and hold them off a while."

Marion started to protest, but I didn't give her a chance. I picked her up bodily and forced her, struggling, through the tube compartment into the interior of the sub. Then I went back to the mouth of the tube, hand on the wheel, ready to lock it fast if Gerry had to dive through in a hurry.

THE water was already pouring into the rock chamber; tumbling and splashing. The floor was covered with icy cold waves to the depth of a foot and rising visibly. Ugru was nowhere in sight. But Gerry was fighting for his life.

The entrance to the cavern lock was open. Someone, it may have been Petrie, was dashing through with smoking gun. Gerry, hidden to one side, stepped forward, clubbed him with his now empty gun. The man went down like a poled ox into the welter of waters. Already they were pouring through the opening, spreading into the underground world.

I yelled to him to come on, but he couldn't. For the other gunmen had piled through and were on top of him. It was a twisting, squirming, heaving mass. They could not use their weapons at such close quarters without killing their own men.

The water was not raising any further. As fast as it came in, it ran out through the entrance into the hollow world. In despair, I started out from the ejector tube in a hopeless attempt to help Gerry, when a noise like ten thousand Niagaras stopped me short. I shot one swift glance around, and jumped back into the ejector tube, just in time.

A solid wall of water darted down the cavern, picked up the powerful submarine, tossed it dizzily about like a tiny chip. I caught a last glimpse of those struggling figures buried beneath mountains of water, and then it was swirling into the tube until I was waist deep. Inside the sub, on the other side of the inner lock, which luckily I had had sense enough to close, I heard Marion's scream.

My dulled mind held fixedly to one thought. I must get Gerry somehow. Foolish, insane, of course. Gerry was dead, crushed under that welter of waters; I would be dead soon too. Already the flood was waist deep and coming up fast. But I was beyond coherent thought, I struggled against its almost irresistible onrush, trying to dive out of the tube.

I was still struggling vainly when I saw something moving in the pea-green depths. A dark, slender form shot toward me with the grace of a fish, seemingly attached to another and inert mass. A webbed hand reached out, caught me just as my lungs were filling with water, pushed me back into the tube.

My head bobbed above the surface, gasping. Ugru's wet skin shone sleekly as he supported Gerry's lolling head above the waters.

"Close door," he hissed. I coughed up some gallons of water, grasped at the valve. Luckily it was close by. It creaked protestingly, but it worked. The slide closed upon the incoming waters. Ugru sup-

ported us both to the other end. A twist at the inner valve, and we were tumbled into the sub with a rush of water. Marion closed it quickly behind us and caught at Gerry with tight, possessive arms.

SOME half hour later, the *Sea Squid* was resting quietly on the ocean bottom outside the submerged world of the Keras. Gerry was himself again, after a fashion. All our wounds were dressed, and the water drained from our lungs.

Gerry grasped the fish-man's hand. "Thanks," he said warmly, "you saved all our lives with your quick wit."

Ugru grinned. "Let all water in at once. Drown them. Catch you and pull you in."

"But what are you going to do now? Your world is ocean now; all your people killed! Come with us."

The fish-man shook his head. "No. Me stay here. Kera not dead. Only swim around. Petrie, he, others, dead. No breathe water. Me go back. Know how empty. Live again peace." He tapped his breast proudly. "Me Emperor again."

"And a damned good Emperor too," I responded cordially.

It was with real regret that we finally let him out through the tube, watched his graceful form darting fish-like through the blackness of ocean's depths in the visor-screens, saw him wave a webbed hand as he vanished into the drowned lock that led into his underground world.

Then we headed upward, back to our own world of sun and air and sky.

"You know," I said, as the engines throbbed their steady beat, "there's only one thing that worries me." "What is that?" Marion asked.

"I hate to leave that ten million cooling itself down there."

Gerry looked at me queerly. "It isn't," he said. "It's all packed snugly in the sub's hold. Petrie was preparing to take it up and market it."

## Coming In Our Next Issue!

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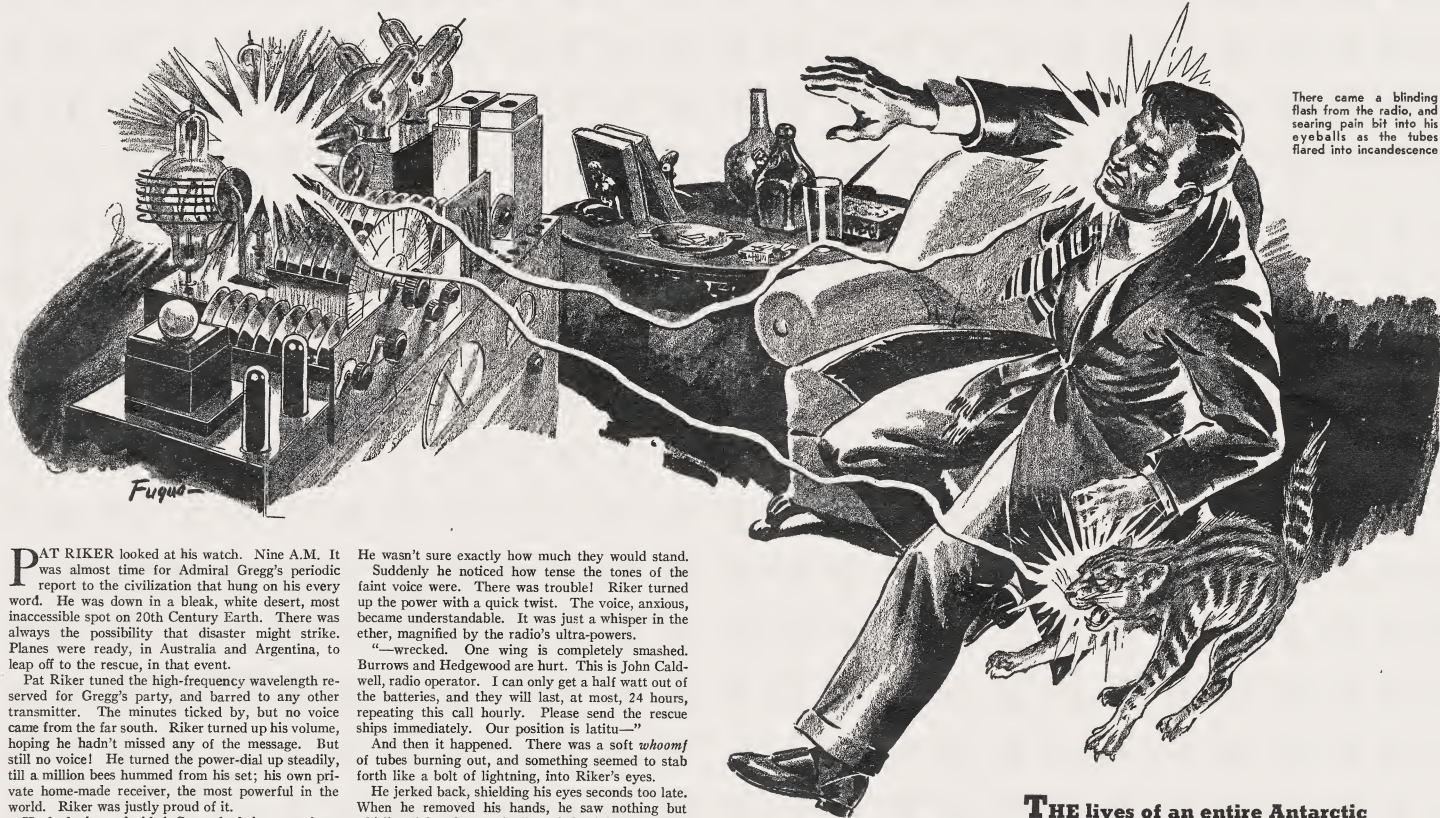
November issue

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# THE MAN WHO SAW TOO LATE

BY EANDO BINDER



There came a blinding flash from the radio, and searing pain bit into his eyeballs as the tubes flared into incandescence

PAT RIKER looked at his watch. Nine A.M. It was almost time for Admiral Gregg's periodic report to the civilization that hung on his every word. He was down in a bleak, white desert, most inaccessible spot on 20th Century Earth. There was always the possibility that disaster might strike. Planes were ready, in Australia and Argentina, to leap off to the rescue, in that event.

Pat Riker tuned the high-frequency wavelength reserved for Gregg's party, and barred to any other transmitter. The minutes ticked by, but no voice came from the far south. Riker turned up his volume, hoping he hadn't missed any of the message. But still no voice! He turned the power-dial up steadily, till a million bees hummed from his set; his own private home-made receiver, the most powerful in the world. Riker was justly proud of it.

He had about decided Gregg had for once been delayed, when he caught the faint sound of a voice, underneath the power-hum. He'd need more volume yet—more than he had ever used before. He glanced a bit anxiously at the tubes, already glowing hotly.

He wasn't sure exactly how much they would stand.

Suddenly he noticed how tense the tones of the faint voice were. There was trouble! Riker turned up the power with a quick twist. The voice, anxious, became understandable. It was just a whisper in the ether, magnified by the radio's ultra-powers.

"—wrecked. One wing is completely smashed. Burrows and Hedgewood are hurt. This is John Caldwell, radio operator. I can only get a half watt out of the batteries, and they will last, at most, 24 hours, repeating this call hourly. Please send the rescue ships immediately. Our position is latitu—"

And then it happened. There was a soft *whoomf* of tubes burning out, and something seemed to stab forth like a bolt of lightning, into Riker's eyes.

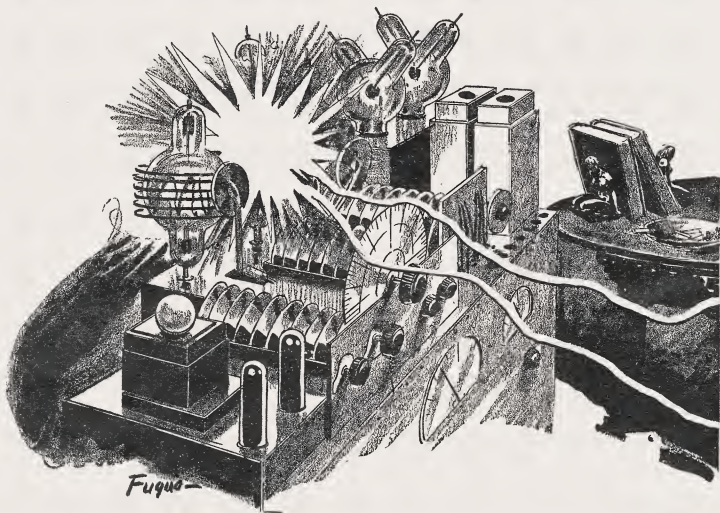
He jerked back, shielding his eyes seconds too late. When he removed his hands, he saw nothing but whirling lights that gradually faded. A little shakily, he groped for the power switch, snapping it on and off. Dead!

The SOS had been cut off just as Caldwell was about to give their all-important position in the white

**THE lives of an entire Antarctic expedition depended on Pat Riker's vision, and he was worse than blind. Everything he saw had occurred nearly three minutes before**



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**T**HE lives of an entire Antarctic expedition depended on Pat Riker's vision, and he was worse than blind. Everything he saw had occurred nearly three minutes before

hell of Antarctica. Riker chewed his tongue and reflected that coincidence could pop up at the most amazing, and annoying times. But he had been more or less expecting the tubes to give way under the overload of power.

Riker heard now the mewing of Pete, his large Angora cat, from the corner. From the farthest corner of the workshop room, in fact. He remembered now that the cat, who had been on the bench nosing at the set, had let out a terrified cry and had leaped away.

"You too, eh?" said Riker soothingly, feeling his way along the wall to the corner and reaching down to pet the animal. He often talked aloud to it, in the long hours of his work. "But it'll be over in a few moments—these spots in front of our eyes. Let's just take it easy till we can see properly again." Riker realized he was trying to calm his own racing pulse.

As he stroked its fur, the cat's frightened mewing changed to a half-hearted purr. They waited, man and cat, as the dancing light streaks obscuring their vision slowly faded. Riker was puzzled. What kind of radiation had struck their eyes, from the overloaded tubes. Ultra-violet?

Of course, it would have to happen at that crucial moment, he reflected bitterly. Five men stranded beside a wrecked plane in isolated Antarctica, position unknown! Riker would have to get his set to working again, and pick up the next SOS, for the position. Without that, the rescue planes might search forever in that white wilderness. And probably no other radio on Earth—it struck him forcefully—could pick up their weak half-watt call! It depended on Riker!

A FEW minutes later, Pat Riker arose. He could see again. He made his way toward the radio, to investigate damages, but let out a startled "oof!" He had struck with his stomach against the back of the easy chair before the radio.

Riker stopped, with his breath half knocked out, and wondered how he could be so clumsy. He hadn't even seen the chair. He looked down at it now. But he still didn't see it!

Furthermore, the most amazing phenomenon took place—the whole room turned down with his eyes. He seemed to be hanging precariously on a vertical floor, with the other end of the room at the bottom of a pit!

Riker made the sound that people make when ice-cold water hits their bare skin. Dizzied, he hastily looked up again. The room obediently straightened out. This motion, combined with the blow on his stomach, very nearly made him dash for the bathroom, but he had a sinking feeling, mental this time, that he might not find it in time. So, valiantly, he conquered his weakness.

Still swallowing, he eased himself into the chair-cushions, feeling his way. This would take some thought. What was it all about? He wasn't blinded. He distinctly *saw* things. But he was seeing them in the wrong order, or something like that.

Pat Riker felt momentarily dismayed. A hollow feeling came up inside of him. But then he took hold of his nerves. He would reason this out, and not go into a panic. He made experiments in line with mental deductions.

First of all, holding his head rigidly against the back of the chair, he moved his eyes. The scene that he apparently saw did not change in the slightest. He was still seeing the room *from the viewpoint of the corner*, where he had been several minutes before.

But now, suddenly, the scene shifted. He was moving forward in the room—so his eyes told him—toward the workbench. The easy chair now loomed in front of him. He flinched as it struck his stomach—in the view. But that had happened minutes ago. He was sitting in the easy chair now. It was like a movie reel passing before his eyes.

Riker put two and two together and got a time-honored four. His vision was somehow *several minutes behind time*. That is, what his eyes saw wasn't transmitted to his brain's optical center until that much later.

He gave out an unhappy grunt as he came to that staggering conclusion. He had never heard of such a thing before and it made his skin crawl.

He reasoned out also why the scenes before his mental eye dipped or rose as he lowered or raised his head. The balancing canals of the inner ear, independent of the eye, knew the slightest change of his head's position. When the canals, linked with gravity, said he was looking down, he was simply looking *down*, even if his delayed vision showed a level floor whose visual impression had struck his retina minutes before—when his head *had* been level.

A puzzled mew, more plaintive than before, came from the corner.

"Poor Pete," said Riker feelingly. "I at least know what's wrong. You don't."

SITTING in the chair, Riker watched the queer delayed sight unwind before his eyes. It all checked. The view changed to show the floor and chair, as he had stood looking down, in surprise, after the bump. Then the room again, dancing fitfully, as he must have stared around wildly at the time he thought of the bathroom.

He grinned wryly. Once he had taken a boat ride on a choppy lake and had decided then that he was no seaman. Now he was sure of it. By sheer force of will he fought back nausea. But why did this have to happen to him, he thought rebelliously—and especially now? Five men down in Antarctica shivered in the icy winds of the South Polar regions. . . .

What had happened to the sane and orderly world he had known just a few minutes before?

Now the view of the room turned as he had fumbled his way into the chair. Then it fused more or less into his present perspective, looking straight out from the chair toward the radio.

Just what had come out of the radio, to cause this?

The blowing tubes had released some kind of beam, or radiation, that had bathed his eyeballs. But instead of blinding him—he was really lucky at that—it had caused the weird delayed vision. It had played some ghastly trick with his optic nerves. Not being a physiologist, Riker made no conjectures about it, beyond the fact itself. Which, in brief, was that there was a lapse of time between his seeing with his eyes and his "seeing" with his brain. The brain was behind time.

How much? Riker applied a simple technique to find out. He first pulled out his watch, then put it back with a sheepish snort. He couldn't time it that way, obviously, since he couldn't see the watch. So, when he closed his eyes, he began counting:

"One steam-engine—two steam-engine—three steam-engine—" This method of counting, if one enunciated clearly, seldom fell off the true minute by more than a few seconds.

At sixty steam-engine he started over again. He reached another sixty and had to start once more. This time, at fifty-three, the scene his brain saw flicked out. Thus, since he had closed his eyes two minutes and fifty-three steam-engines before, his brain-perception was approximately three minutes behind his eye-vision.

"Pete," admonished Riker, trying to see some humor in the situation, "if yuh see a mouse, don't bother to jump at it. You will be three minutes too late."

**A** WHILE later, Pat Riker found himself on edge. The phenomenon wasn't going away. It hadn't occurred to him that it was anything but a temporary condition. It was fascinating in a way, but he thought of the five men, down in the Antipodes, waiting to be rescued. Waiting, in the last analysis, for *him*! To all intents and purposes, he was as good as blind with his trick eyesight. He wouldn't be able to see what his fingers were doing—till three minutes later. How could he repair the radio?

No, the thing would have to go. But obstinately, it didn't, even after an hour. A gray worry made him nervous. He had the fantastic thought that if an intruder were now before him, ready to slit his throat with a sharp knife, he wouldn't know of it! Then he reproved himself for such petty self-concern. What about the five stranded men, in snow-bound Antarctica? That burning thought drove him to make an attempt at repairing the radio.

It wasn't the tubes he was worrying about. They were standard makes, and he had replacements. With a good deal of fumbling, and three-minute peerings at their numbers, he substituted twelve new tubes for the burned out ones. But turning on the switch brought no answering hum from the set. He felt among the wiring and found the source of the trouble three minutes before his eyes saw it. Of the welter of spidery wires leading to his newly invented "sub-ether selector," half were fused short. There were exactly 246 wires. Over a hundred must be replaced

and soldered!

Heating the electric iron, he tried soldering some of the leads, performing operations that he saw only after three minutes. He saw that his blind fingers had made mistakes among the closely positioned lugs. And he had knocked three more wires loose, in his blundering. A blind man could do no worse. He gave up, with a nightmarish feeling of helplessness.

Worst of all, he couldn't call in outside help. The most skilled radio technician would be baffled. Riker had only sketchy diagrams of his new circuit. The rest he carried in his head. He might explain—no, that would take days and days, for all those wires.

And the thin thread of voice from Antarctica would cease within 24 hours! What could be done? Riker's brain began to ache. He wondered if in all history, a man had ever been placed in his dilemma. He sat down to think, biting his lips.

He jumped up suddenly. Half way to the phone, he decided he was going the wrong way—toward the radio—and turned. But he was still facing that way, as far as he could see. Confused, a derelict in the middle of the room, he cursed, stretched out his hands and made mincing steps forward, ignoring what his eyes told him. In this sleepwalker fashion, he finally touched a wall-shelf of books, knocking several to the floor, while his lying eyes told him he should be perched on top the radio, fifteen feet away.

Oriented by the bookshelf, feeling his way, he came to the wall phone and called information. He got the number of the low-wave radio station which, in conjunction with one in Australia, was keeping a 24-hour-a-day vigil for Admiral Gregg's calls. After some shunting from person to person, Riker was finally connected with the key-man, Paul Gregory.

Riker wondered how to begin. He decided to come right out with it. "Admiral Gregg and his men crashed!" he said bluntly.

"What!" Gregory's voice was a shocked treble. "It's true that they missed sending their last regular call, but that doesn't necessarily mean—" He broke off and demanded, "Who are you?"

Riker told his story, except for the delayed vision, which was irrelevant at the moment.

"How could you have picked up that call?" said Gregory impatiently. "Neither we nor Australia did. And no one else has reported such a call. You must be a crank."

He seemed about to hang up. "Wait!" pleaded Riker. "I just happened to pick it up," he stated, as earnestly as he could. He decided against telling of his super-radio—then he *would* be taken as a crank. "You'll simply have to believe me, that those men are stranded."

"You didn't get the position?"

"No. But if you send planes down there, equipped with radio, they might be able to pick up the call," suggested Riker.

The official seemed to reflect. "We'll have to send out at least one, just on the chance you're right," he

returned finally. "Your set is damaged? Can we send a repair man around? We can't overlook any possibilities—"

"It wouldn't be any use," responded Riker. "My set is completely burned out, because of the power I used." He hung up, feeling a little better over the situation. It was more or less out of his hands now.

TWO hours later Pat Riker decided to go out, delayed vision or no. Besides, he was hungry. He shuddered just a little at the thought of venturing out, with little better optical equipment than a blind man. But he also thrilled a little. In a way, it would be an adventure.

"You stay here, Pete," he admonished, feeling the cat rub against his ankles. "You'd be completely lost, with your lack of reasoning powers." He pushed the animal away and slipped out of the door quickly, cutting off its protesting mew.

He couldn't see the hall that stretched to the front vestibule. He was still seeing the room he had left. He felt his way along one wall, hoping no one else in the big rooming house would come along and see him groping like a blind man.

He stopped when he heard the front door creak open and close again. Someone coming in, just when he didn't want it. He stood still, trying to look aimlessly composed, although why he should be standing in the hall like that would be a question.

Footsteps approached, two pairs of them. "This must be the place," said feminine tones. A man's voice answered in the affirmative.

Riker realized they must be staring at him, standing like a statue. His embarrassment made him decide to move, either forward or backward. He chose forward—and bumped squarely into the woman!

He could hear her stumble back with a sharp gasp. Now she must be glaring at him. "Hm—drunk!" she pronounced, and Riker couldn't blame her for the accusation. He mumbled an apology.

Her voice changed. "Are you by any chance Mr. Riker, the man who called Paul Gregory at the radio station?"

"Yes!" returned Riker wonderingly.

"Oh!" Her voice held relief. "Then it isn't true after all! When I went to the studio, alarmed that no call had come from Admiral Gregg's expedition, Mr. Gregory told me of your message. He said you were probably a crank, but I wanted to make sure." Her voice became reproving. "It was a mean thing to do, Mr. Riker, scaring us about those men being stranded. But I'm glad anyway, that it's just a—drunken prank."

Riker half growled. His temper rose, with his nerves not in the best condition.

"I'm not drunk!" he denied angrily. "My eyes are a little—weak. Furthermore, it wasn't a prank. It's true, about the message. I did receive it, and Admiral Gregg's party is stranded!" He wondered what the woman—he pictured her with a hatchet-face—

would say to that.

He heard her sharp gasp, and sensed that she had her hand at her throat. "John! He's in danger!" It was the involuntary cry of a woman, hearing bad news of a loved one.

At that moment, Riker saw the previous scene unfolded, to his slowed sight. He saw the woman come in while he stood still, glance at him and approach, followed by a man with a black case. As she neared, Riker saw she was a young girl, and—far from being a hatchet-faced type—was pretty! Then the hall scene jerked forward, as he had moved before. Her shoulder struck his. She fell back. Then her lips gave out her denunciation. He heard nothing, of course, of words that had been uttered three minutes before.

R IKER came to the present as he heard a muffled sob. He felt suddenly sorry for her. "Your husband?" he asked.

"My brother," returned the girl. Her voice became more controlled. "I'm Rita Caldwell. Mr. Riker, if you picked up one call, you must be able to do it again. I've brought a repair man along from the radio station."

Riker shrugged but turned to lead the way to his room. He knew his course was unsteady, and felt the back of his ears turn red. At the doorway, by dint of careful mental plotting, he made a fairly straight course to the workbench and radio. The radio technician followed and bent over the exposed parts of the set.

Ten minutes later, after useless explanations by Riker, the man gave up without opening his kit of tools. "Queer outfit," he declared, shaking his head. "It's beyond me. It would take me a week to get somewhere with it. There's only one man who can fix it, and that's yourself."

Riker agreed.

"Then why don't you?" demanded the girl. "Instead of—drinking!" She had evidently been brooding about her brother; her face was drawn. "Five men are in danger of death down there! How can you waste even a minute—oh!" She turned away, half sobbing again.

"I tell you it's my eyes," protested Riker lamely. Should he go on and tell of the incredible delayed vision? He started to, but the girl interrupted.

"I'll have to go," she said. "My nerves are unsettled." Her voice came from the doorway, pleadingly. "But please try to repair your radio. So much depends on it!" Then they left.

Pat Riker thought that over and felt miserable. If he only *could* repair the radio! But that was impossible with his damnable delayed vision. He would have to wait till it left him. If it didn't soon, he would seek medical advice. For the second time he left. He felt he had to get away from the room, and the thought of the five men waiting—waiting—

He groped his way down the hall to the vestibule,



this time without interruption, and stepped from the front door. Then someone came out, while he was standing and said cheerily, "Good morning, Riker!"

"Uh, same to you—" returned Riker. He had been about to add a name, but thought better of it. It sounded like Saunders, third floor roomer, but might be Tillson, second floor rear. They both had deep voices. Three minutes later Riker saw a figure give him a silent greeting, stare at him for a moment and then shrug and walk away. Tillson, after all.

WHEN his vision had caught up, Riker looked over the familiar neighborhood in which he had lived for the past two years. Back of him was the large rooming house. The street was fairly quiet, though the next intersection was busy. He knew his way around, but would have to watch his step with his perplexing slow vision.

He judged his course nicely from the steps and reached the board fence along the sidewalk. He turned, hugging the fence.

Very slowly and deliberately he walked along, trusting that people would step out of his way. He could hear quick sidesteps and feel stares at the back of his neck. He heard one lady's voice, saying to another, "What a rude man! He wouldn't step out of the way an inch!" The other said, "Looks like a sleep-walker, the way he holds his head stiff and doesn't move his eyes."

Riker didn't dare move his head. If he did, the whole street scene before his mental vision would swing with it, and he'd be lost. He must be near now, to the restaurant on the corner. Suddenly disaster struck. A childish voice said, "Look out, mister!" and Riker's shins were bumped by a boy on a tricycle.

Riker's head moved, the whole scene shifted, and he was stranded. How could he know which way to turn and be sure he was right? All directions were right, as far as he could see. Blind? It was worse than being blind, he reflected in dismay.

He had to wait three minutes, with his head fixed in one position, till he found out which way he was turned. He put his hands in his pockets and whistled, so people would think he was waiting for someone, standing pointlessly in the middle of the sidewalk. Once again oriented, he aimed for the door of the restaurant. It was almost like aiming a cannon, and then becoming a human cannonball. But an appetite that had always been healthy could not be denied.

He reached the haven of the restaurant safely. He bumped a man going in, said "Pardon me," and then felt himself jostled by others coming out. To Riker for a moment it seemed the universe was filled with elbows, knees and toe-crushing shoes. Belligerent voices told him to watch where he was going, or get glasses if he needed them. Half in a panic, Riker decided he should never have ventured into a small space filled with moving humanity. Shoved and sworn at by low voices, he finally felt a wall at his back and

clung to it, flustered and a little miserable.

RIKER stood, waiting to see the tables. In the meantime, his mental eye was seeing the glares of the people in the previous episode. Also his vision had flicked over a clock and he saw the time. It was noon now. He tried to stifle the following thought—that in twenty-one hours or so the thin appeal from Antarctica would blink out into defeated silence. Stubbornly, he told himself not to let it spoil his appetite.

When he saw the tables, he moved for the nearest empty one. As he was about to sit down, some dim warning worked and he stopped. He heard a person's breathing and realized that during the three-minute wait, the empty seat had been taken. With a muttered apology, he moved to the next table and sat down. Luckily, all was well this time. Three minutes later he saw that he had nearly sat down in a young lady's lap, and wondered what pandemonium that would have created.

The process of eating brought up new complications. His mouth was not so easy to find. His first spoonful of soup—he was immediately sorry he had ordered it—touched his nose and spilled down his chin. The second spoonful spilled to the tablecloth, since he hadn't been able to see that he had tilted the spoon. He gave up the soup. The steak was tender but cutting it was nevertheless laborious. He had to gauge carefully and by instinct so the pieces wouldn't be too large. Then, by placing his elbow on the table as an immovable fulcrum, he was able to get the forkfuls of food more or less accurately to his mouth. By these trial-and-error methods, he progressed slowly. He saw other diners watching him surreptitiously, and felt conspicuous, but was too hungry to care much.

An hour later he made his way out of the restaurant's side door, which was less used, without mishap. Outside, he stood for a while, waiting till the cashier was counting out money in his hands, to his lagging vision. Never in his life had Riker failed to check his change from purchases. He wasn't going to start now. The amount was correct. Without thinking, he began stuffing the imaginary bills in his pocket, then grinned ruefully. The money had been in his pocket for three minutes.

He made his way slowly down the street. Go back to his room, avoid all this madness? No! It was at least a unique enough adventure to keep his mind off the stranded Antarctic explorers. And from the thought of the girl and her last appeal. Besides, the queer delayed vision would undoubtedly go away soon.

A little chill went up his spine. Suppose the phenomenon *didn't* go away, ever? Suppose all his life . . . he broke off the disquieting thought.

He saw a clock on a building front. A voice said, within his brain: "Twenty hours!" He began to hate clocks.

He was able to move down the sidewalk of this street with less fear of wandering. It was a traffic

thoroughfare and the sound of moving cars at his right guided him. He was beginning to learn the value of sound in his sight-delayed world—like a blind man.

But when he came to the next intersection, where the cross street was also a busy boulevard, he wondered how he could cross without risking life and limb. Standing and listening for a while, he found it possible to judge when the traffic lights changed by the squeaks of brakes in one direction and the roars of starting cars in the other. Confident in this reasoning, he started across at the next change. He heard voices of people beside him, also crossing, so he had guessed correctly.

But when half way across, he heard the sudden squeal of brakes, and gasps behind him. Riker stood in a paralysis of fear. Was he in danger? It was ironic to reflect, as he did fleetingly, that he would see the danger in three minutes, but that was no help now. He was stiff as a post, holding his breath, waiting for it to happen.

A HAND clutched his arm and jerked him back three steps. He felt a fender brush his pants leg. There were excited voices.

"Are you drunk?" asked a man's voice in his ear, obviously the one who had rescued him. "I ought to run you in! What's the idea of trying to cross diagonally?"

Diagonally! So he had wandered, and nearly run into a car making a right turn. It was the traffic cop at the intersection who had spoken.

"I'm—I'm a little near-sighted and forgot my glasses," mumbled Riker.

Still holding his arm, the policeman guided him to the sidewalk, lecturing him. Then he left. Riker clung to the corner lamp-post, shaken. Three minutes later he sidestepped a phantom car, his heart almost stopping. It had been close. He stood for a while longer, composing his nerves.

As he was about to move away, he heard again that hated squeal of brakes—then a sodden thump and a child's scream. Somewhere before him, an accident had really happened! Almost immediately there was the roar of a departing car—a hit-and-run driver, escaping!

Riker's mind thought of something. As nearly as he could judge, he turned his eyes in the direction of the car speeding away. He watched, with unseeing eyes, but with eyes that *would* see.

In the midst of the confusion of sound over the accident, the traffic cop's voice arose: "Did anyone catch his license number?" Several eye-witnesses gave contradictory numbers. "Always the same!" snarled the cop. "People never keep their heads when seconds count. He'll get away with it!"

Riker tensed himself. Suddenly the accident reenacted itself to his delayed vision. He saw the big car's fender knock a child down, saw it leap away. But he also saw the license numbers, because he had thought to fasten his unseeing eyes on the fleeing car.

The numbers were off-focus a little, but prepared as he was to concentrate on them, he swiftly read them off.

It was quite a struggle for the near-blind Riker to get through the crowd to the traffic cop, who had just placed the unconscious victim in another car, but finally he clutched the officer's arm.

"I saw the accident," he said eagerly. "And the license number. It was 318-445."

"Good! I'll put that down," returned the policeman. His voice changed. "Say, aren't you the near-sighted fellow who nearly got clipped a while back—?"

But Riker had slipped back into the crowd. He felt a small glow of pride at what he had done, as he continued down the avenue. At least he wasn't as badly off as a blind man, in his present condition. He had put his affliction to some small use, and it made him feel good.

But only for a second. Then the nagging thought of the five men marooned down in icy desolation cropped to the fore again. Good God, must it plague him every inch of the way? It wasn't his fault that they faced doom. He hadn't *jailed* them, in any sense. But he realized he was trying to run away from that grinding implication. Trying to cram his mind with other impressions, so he *wouldn't* feel it was his fault. Detachedly, he reflected that the mind could be an instrument of diabolical torture.

A clock again, in a store window. "*Nineteen hours!*" came the parenthetical thought.

R IKER continued walking in his strange double-world. It was like being in two different dimensions, one a silent unreal image superimposed over the other of sound and touch. Coming to a movie theatre, he decided on impulse to go in. His nerves felt in need of quieting.

The theatre was not crowded so that Riker had little trouble seating himself. It was not till then that he realized what a ridiculous thing the talking picture would be to him. What he saw and what he heard failed to mesh—by three minutes. The handsome leading man, trying to win the lovely lady, was saying: "Drive faster! We've got to get there in time!" Three minutes later a tense face over a driving wheel was cooing: "You're beautiful!"

Entire sequences, where there was little pantomime and the plot movement depended on dialogue, were lost to Riker. With his mind's eye, he was viewing a silent movie too subtle for comprehension. With his ears, he was hearing a radio-sketch with blank holes in its continuity. He contented himself with matching up snatches of previous conversation with visible events in the picture. At a comedy sequence, wherein a dour-faced comedian was trying to throw a lariat, Riker snickered a little. But he stopped in embarrassment, to realize the rest of the audience was silent, almost tearful. Three minutes later he saw the reason—a death scene.

Leaving the theatre when he had had his fill of

this garbled entertainment, Riker headed for home. A hated clock loomed out of the meanderings of his delayed vision—*eighteen hours!*

It had darkened considerably while he had been in the theatre. A storm was brewing. Jagged flashes of lightning lanced in the sky; the rumble of thunder sounded. One particularly loud roll of thunder came unawares, to Riker. Its flash came something less than three minutes later, in a complete reversal of natural laws. Riker reflected that he was the only one in the world who could say he had heard thunder *before* seeing the lightning flash that caused it!

On the last half-block to his rooms, Riker tried to hurry his slow, careful pace a little. Rain was beginning to patter down. Suddenly, he collided violently with a figure, but recovered his balance. The other person had apparently fallen down, by the sound. There was only a little warning—an angrily muttered "Wise guy!"—and then something cracked on Riker's chin. He reeled against the fence. The other's footsteps receded.

Riker straightened a little dazedly and maneuvered for the haven of his home. When he reached the front door, he witnessed the collision. The other man had been hurrying too, hat pulled low against the rain, and he was a big chap. As a climax, a ballooning fist hurtled into Riker's face. Though prepared, he could not keep from wincing and ducking. He remembered the man's face. If he ever met him again, when circumstances were normal, the debt would be repaid!

Safely in his room at last, his Angora cat welcomed him with a human-sounding meow, rubbing against his ankles. Feeling as though he had returned from an insane asylum, Riker sank thankfully into his easy chair.

"Believe me, Pete," he sighed, as he stroked his chin and the cat's soft fur alternately, "this delayed vision is hell on wheels."

AND then, from directly before him, beside the radio set, came the sound of breathing. Riker started violently, not realizing anyone had been in the room.

"Drinking!" came the accusing voice of Rita Caldwell. "You didn't even see me! And you haven't done a bit of work on your radio."

"How—" choked Riker.

"I got in easily enough," explained the girl shortly, divining his question. "You didn't lock the door. I came back a few minutes ago, to see if you were doing any repairs. Instead, you've been out all this time, while Admiral Gregg and his men—"

"You don't understand—" protested Riker.

The girl's voice became sharply scornful, with a hysterical edge to it. "I understand that you're selfish, inhuman, without a shred of feeling—" She broke off, panting in her emotion.

Riker saw her now, her hands clenched before her, eyes angry. He thought privately that she looked very attractive, even in her excited state.

"If you'll let me explain, I'll tell you why I haven't done any repairs," Riker spoke firmly. He went on, telling of his delayed vision. When he had finished, he saw the first look of amazement on her face, of three minutes before.

"I'm sorry!" she said in a low, sympathetic voice. "I didn't understand."

Riker felt her hand on his suddenly, urging him to his feet. "I'm taking you to an eye specialist," she said.

In a taxi on the way, the girl told how alarm had grown for the safety of the Gregg expedition. No slightest message had been received, though two British cruisers and a dozen aircraft in southern waters were within a thousand miles, with their radio set constantly open. The powerful Australian short-wave station had broadcast an appeal to the expedition to reply immediately, without result. This meant that either the stranded party's return signals were too weak for reception, or that ether conditions were temporarily bad, or that the men had succumbed.

"My brother," murmured the girl. "I may never see him again!"

"Don't think of that," put in Riker hurriedly. "They'll be found. My radio, when it's repaired, will pick up their message, no matter how weak."

He found himself patting her hand, comforting her. She didn't draw her hand away, and Riker saw the smile on her face, a trifle wan, three minutes later.

Several hours later, three specialists gave the results of their examinations. Pat Riker and Rita Caldwell waited expectantly.

"It is a peculiar case," said one of the doctors, clearing his throat. "The rods and cones of your retinas are all right, and are still able to receive light impulses. But the optic nerve, leading to the occipital lobe of the brain, is damaged."

"We surmise that strong ultra-violet radiation was given off by the tubes when they blew out. Your sight was saved by a slim margin. If the rays had been a little stronger, you would have been completely blinded, just as one would be blinded by looking into the sun, and its ultra-violet radiation,\* too long."

Riker felt heartened that they had been able to diagnose it so thoroughly. "What about a cure?" he asked eagerly.

The specialists looked at one another. "We believe it a kindness to tell you at once. There is no cure! Those damaged nerve-cells will remain as they are; and the symptoms of delayed vision. You will go through life that way!"

Riker felt as though the sky had fallen. He was as good as blind for the rest of his life! He knew Rita Caldwell was looking at him pityingly, though he would not see it for three minutes. But he felt sym-

\*The rays, in Riker's case, striking the sensitive nerve-cells, seared them and caused them to shrink. That made the *synapses*—the spaces between the cells—wider. So when his eyes received light impulses, the impulses had to jump over these wider gaps, and therefore limped to the occipital lobe, taking almost three minutes instead of the normal 1/30 of a second.—Ed.

pathy for her, thinking of her brother, as the voice in his brain droned out: "Fifteen hours!"

"Glasses, of course, wouldn't help?" said Riker dully.

"Glasses only concentrate light-images for weak eyes. They can't help your damaged optic-nerve. Nor would any operation. There is nothing we can do."

**R**ITA CALDWELL led Riker to the door of his room. They hadn't spoken much, returning from the hospital.

"I'll try to repair the radio," he promised firmly. "I'll work at it all night. Maybe as I go along, I'll find a way to work faster." She squeezed his arm and left. Three minutes later, when he was inside, he saw the look on her face and told Pete she must love her brother very much.

Riker tried to keep his promise. He spent the evening stubbornly improving the technique of using his hands, with visual check-ups three minutes later. If only the web of wires weren't so infernally intricate!

It was to Riker's credit that he thought more of the stranded explorers than himself. But somewhere in his subconscious the phrase "Go through life that way" had stuck, and began to repeat like a dirge, along with the voice that kept counting off the hours of doom for the expedition.

He called up the restaurant after a while and had them bring over sandwiches and coffee. He didn't feel like venturing out again. The adventurous thrill of that had worn off. He poured milk into a bowl for Pete and watched the puzzled, hungry creature half drown itself first till it had gained experience in judging where the milk level was.

Riker went back to work, nervous, harried. The repairs were hardly begun. Working straight through, at this rate, he could not finish in less than 48 hours. And how much time was there left to pick up the weakening signals?—no more than twelve hours!

Riker gave up at midnight: He could do nothing, he groaned aloud. But the men still had a chance. A vast program of organized search had already been launched. Aircraft must be now cruising over Antarctica itself. They might yet pick up Gregg's weak signals and learn their position. Then it would be simple.

But all the time Riker had an insistent inner conviction that the signals were too weak to be intercepted by any other radio on Earth except his own supersensitive set! And that, by the mischance of fate, lay useless.

He went to bed in mental confusion. He was hardly aware that he had undressed. After he turned off the lights, he had to wait three minutes before darkness surrounded him. He reflected humorlessly that he gained three minutes of light over the normal person. But then in the morning, he would lose three minutes. It was like Daylight Saving Time—you never came out ahead.

And then, in the quiet darkness, he had a chance to think over the depressing day. It was beginning to strike home, more and more deeply each minute, what a change had come into his life this day. Today, the delayed vision had been novelty. Tomorrow and the next day and the next, it would be—horror. Go through life that way! He would have that helpless, dependent feeling that blind people must have. He would be a nuisance, and be pitied. His life was ruined! Well, not as bad as that, but it was closer to tragedy than anything else.

He struggled against the stifling incubus of his thoughts. He wouldn't take it lying down. He'd improve his reading technique. He'd never let people read to him, or use Braille like the true blind. How would he live? Oh yes; he had nearly forgotten—he would patent his radio and sell it. He would probably make a tidy little fortune. But he felt no slightest thrill at the thought.

His thought switched away from the personal. Like a spectre, the bleak picture of five men facing doom haunted him. It wasn't his fault, but he felt as though it was. All his life, if they weren't rescued by a miracle, he'd have that feeling. The disconcerting thought crawled into bed with him. He hated the soft, warm feel of the bed. Those five men weren't in soft, warm beds. . . .

Rita Caldwell's face hovered among the phantoms, sometimes accusing, sometimes sympathetic. More than anything, this tortured him.

**R**IKER started from a half-doze not long after, aware that he had been tortured by bad dreams. But something else had awakened him. A gnawing sound. When vision burst into his brain three minutes after he had opened his eyes, he looked in the sound's direction. A bright shaft of moonlight streamed through one window, outlining a square patch of the floor. And there crouched Pete, gnawing at a mouse!

Riker watched in amazement. Pete had caught a mouse, with the handicap of delayed vision! It was unbelievable. Had the mouse run right into him? Or —was Pete's sight back to normal? Riker's pulses throbbed with hope. This might be significant. Was there any clue? Yes, the moonlight!

Holding his hands to the sides of his temples, Riker shielded his eyes from the street glow of the opposing window. Looking now at the busily engaged cat, Riker instantly saw its superimposed image, over that of his sight-delayed vision of the room.

Riker jumped out of bed with a wild cry, startling the cat so that it leaped into the shadows with its prey. "Pete, you little rascal!" yelled Riker. "I think you've done it—"

He kneeled in the patch of moonlight and looked up at the moon with a gaze more rapt than any a lover had ever bestowed upon it. But he did not kneel long, in his silent worship. He grabbed his watch from the pocket of his vest, hanging over a chair, and



looked at the time, in the moonlight. He saw it immediately—one o'clock. Eight hours to go before the last faint signals came from the lost expedition. Eight hours! Could he make it, repair the radio?

His thoughts fluttered. He needed polaroid-lensed goggles. No shops were open at this time of night. Then he remembered and dove for a supply box under the bench, dragging it out into the square patch of moonlight. He tossed out miscellaneous junk, praying silently, and finally found them—two round circles of polaroid glass. He couldn't remember now what he had even used them for, but there they were, thank Heaven.

Feverishly now, he grabbed wire and pliers, sat on the floor cross-legged in his pajamas, and worked in moonlight. Fifteen minutes later he arose with the two polaroid lenses clamped before his eyes, in a makeshift framework of wire. The device pinched his skin sharply, but he was past feeling.

He snapped on the electric lights, heart pumping. Vision leaped into his eyes, through the lenses. *Instant vision!* Riker let out a single screech of triumph that startled Pete into running under the bed. Fully half the normal lighting was cut off by the lenses, but it was far more important that the curse of delayed vision was gone.

Five hours later, at six o'clock, the phone rang. Riker ignored it for three minutes of persistent ringing, but finally leaped to it and growled a "hello!"

"This is Rita Caldwell, Pat. I had to call you. I've been awake all night, at the studio, hoping they'd pick up a call. They haven't. I guess there's no hope for them anymore." Her voice was shaky, with a peculiar note in it as she went on. "I had to call on you, Pat, I don't know why. I—" Her tones took on a concealing politeness. "Are you all right? I mean, are you—well, all right?"

Riker permitted himself, for the space of a second, to feel a thrill that shot from his head to his toes. She had called to find out about him, not his radio! Then he barked into the phone: "Rita, listen! Come right over. Don't ask any questions. Just come!"

RITA CALDWELL came in, a while later, hollow-eyed from lack of sleep, staring wonderingly at Riker. He had the look of a man whose soul had been saved. Riker gave brief snatches of explanation, of which the girl didn't understand a word, and then commanded her to cut lengths of spider-wire, hold the soldering iron, hold the solder, hand him the iron, hand him the solder, now a wire. . . . At some time or other he excused himself for his pajamas.

The girl settled down into his machinelike system. She dimly comprehended that she had a right to hope the radio would be repaired in time. Three hours to go!

At nine o'clock, 24 hours since Riker had first caught the SOS, and fallen into the toils of delayed vision, he shoved the girl back. He made her sit, with her face averted, in the opposite corner of the

room from the radio.

"The tubes might blow again," he explained. "Though I've put in a fuse that should prevent it. Now—"

He snapped on the switch. As he slowly turned up the power, the hum of the superradio hissed through the room. Bit by bit he snaked up the numbers of the volume dial, giving the tubes a chance to take up the peak load gradually. Their two haggard faces strained to hear a human voice underneath the hum.

The volume dial clocked to the end of its stay. The tubes held. Riker let out his breath and tuned with the vernier for the expedition's assigned frequency. A minute passed.

"Hurry! Hurry!" moaned Rita Caldwell, running forward, leaning over his shoulder.

Riker pushed her back roughly with one hand. "Get back!" he snapped, nerves cracking. "The tubes blow yet. Get back, I tell you. I don't want you getting delayed vision, because—" He broke off, wondering what irrelevant thing he had been about to say, in that tense moment.

The girl clutched his arm suddenly, squeezing with surprising strength. A voice, a tiny thread of voice, came from the radio speaker!

"—batteries nearly dead. This will probably be our last call. Position, latitude 78° 4'30". Longitude, east, 137° 21' 15". A pause, then wildly: "For God's sake, can't anyone hear me—"

SIX hours later, Riker, still in his pajamas, stroked the long fur of Pete, who reposed in his lap. Rita Caldwell sat near him. They had been talking of many things, but now she suddenly laughed. "Those glasses! They look so comical! You haven't explained yet, how they work. Can you see perfectly?"

"I can see as well as you, through these polaroid lenses," Riker nodded. "Almost, anyway. By polarized light. Pete, here, who also has delayed vision, caught a mouse in the moonlight last night. That was the clue—moonlight is polarized light. I don't know why, really, but polarized images are transmitted through our trick eyes without more than a second's delay. Maybe it forms a different kind of nerve-impulse that can jump those wide synapses."

The phone rang, and Paul Gregory, calling from the radio station, said: "Gregg's party has been sighted, Riker. A plane just radioed that they're landing beside the wreck. Two more ships are heading there, to pick up all the men. They'll be back in civilization in a few hours, safe and sound, thanks to you. By the way, how much do you want for the patent on your radio? We're prepared to go as high as—"

Riker whistled and half staggered from the phone, though not from delayed vision. He sat down again and put Pete in his lap while telling the girl.

Then he leaned forward a little. "It won't be so bad, wearing polaroid glasses all my life," he said. "They won't look any different on a man than ordinary spectacles. Don't you think so, Rita?"

# The

# INSECT

# INVASION

By  
**FREDERIC  
ARNOLD  
KUMMER, JR.**  
II

## CHAPTER I

### The Frozen Dragon-Fly

ONE HAND steady the steering wheel, Dr. Ames drew a crumpled bit of paper from his pocket, unfolded it, and read the already familiar words.

"Dr. Henry J. Ames, Natural History Department, Western University. Dear Sir: Being acquainted with your entomological work, I am taking the liberty of requesting your aid in a matter of the utmost scientific importance. Should you be interested . . . and I can assure you that this is an opportunity unequalled in the history of entomology . . . call at my country place any afternoon before six. Directions for reaching my home are enclosed. Let me again emphasize the magnitude of my discovery and urge your cooperation. Sincerely, Emmanuel Barr."

Dr. Ames, his lean ascetic face set in a puzzled frown, returned the note to his pocket, gazed at the winding rutted country lane before him. Who was Emmanuel Barr? And what was this great discovery of which he wrote? Was he, Ames, wasting his time

on another charlatan? Ames frowned in deep doubt.

The doctor sighed, swerved the old sedan sharply to avoid a large hole in the road. So many persons came to him with what they believed to be new species of insects. Some of their finds had been rare types, some natural sports . . . but he had yet to discover a new genus. Perhaps this time . . .

A small white clapboard house, overshadowed by giant pines, caught Dr. Ames' eye. At the cottage the roadway ended, dwindling away into a mere footpath soon lost among the trees. The doctor examined the rude map which had been enclosed with the letter, nodded. Unquestionably this was the residence of Emmanuel Barr.

Dr. Ames climbed from his car, was half-way up the gravelled walk when the door of the cottage opened and a tall, dark man, his skin tanned and cross-hatched with the fine lines of constant exposure, stepped onto the porch.

"Dr. Ames?" he boomed. Then, as the professor nodded, "I'm Barr. So good of you to come."

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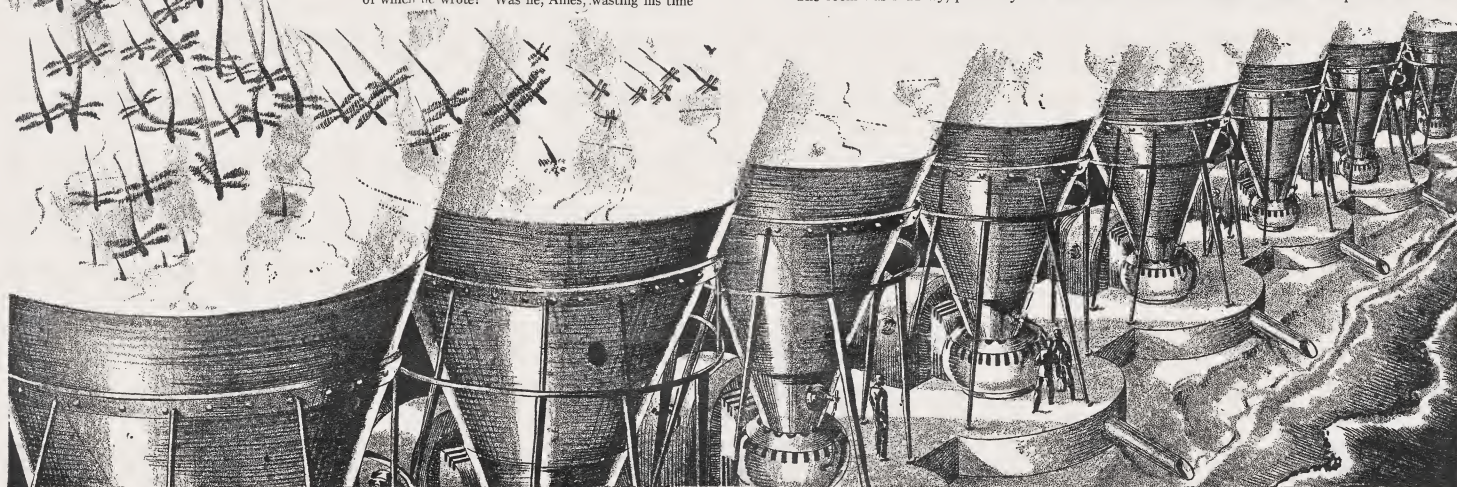
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"Sit down." Barr folded his muscular frame into a big wing chair. "Guess you wondered at my note, eh? Mysterious wording and all that!"

"I must confess it was a trifle . . . er . . . vague," Ames began, "but I hoped . . ."

"Quite so!" Barr filled the room with booming laughter. "I was born in London, doctor, and we British are notoriously cautious. Had I told you just what I'd discovered, you'd have labeled me a madman and refused to come!" He paused a moment,



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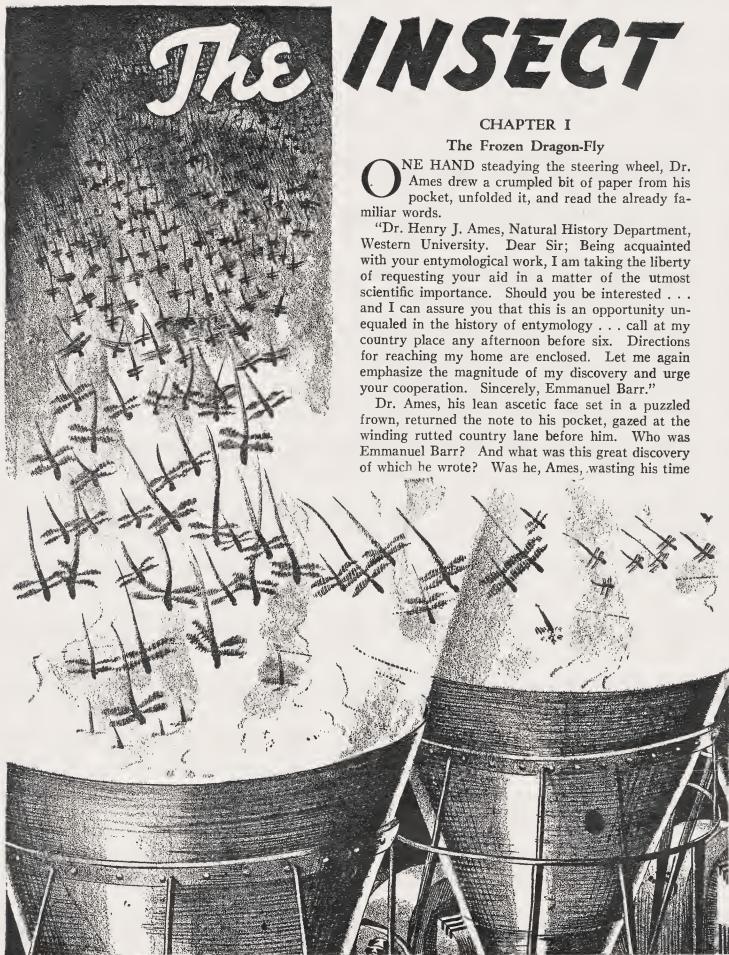
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## II

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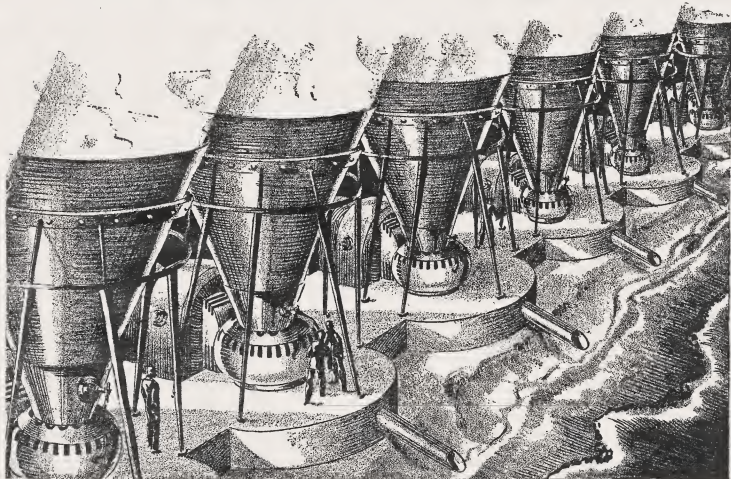
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reflectively, then shot out a question. "Ever hear of Papinov and the Wrangel Island mammoth?"

"If you mean the mastodon that the Russian expedition found perfectly preserved in a glacier . . ."

"Exactly!" Barr cut in, nodding complacently.

"Well, recently I was in the same neck of the woods . . . Alaska . . . hunting for a rather rare species of Coleoptera. But I forgot all about the beetles when I saw the totem pole of a wild, back-country tribe of Eskimo." Barr stood up, took a photograph from the mantel. "Look at this!"

DR. AMES studied the picture. Rather blurred, it showed an Eskimo totem pole on the top of which was a peculiar, rudely-carved figure. At first glance the figure suggested a bird, but as Ames held the snapshot to the light, he could make out rounded wings, bulging, many-faceted eyes and a long, segmented body.

"Queer!" the doctor muttered. "This is remarkably like a common dragon-fly! Yet even the familiar *Libellula quadrimaculata* rarely ventures so far north . . ."

"True!" Barr nodded. "Unfortunately my photograph fails to show the most astounding fact of all. I refer to the amazing detail that the Eskimo sculptor showed in his carving. Eye facets, jaw structure, even foot pads. Detail impossible to perceive on a common dragon-fly, assuming such had served as a model, without a microscope or at least a good magnifying glass."

"A microscope! Ames was all interest, now. "Among a primitive Eskimo tribe! But how on earth . . ."

Precisely what I wanted to know. The tall man strode across the room, took a book from a shelf. "Here we have several excellent drawings of reconstructed palaeozoic insects. Some of them, you will observe, are estimated as having been at least two feet from wing tip to wing tip.\* Giant pre-historic insects!"

"Good God!" Dr. Ames' thin fingers shook noticeably. "You . . . you mean . . ."

"I learned," Barr went on calmly, "that the totem pole had been made only a few years before. Its carver, an old medicine man, was still alive. But only after liberal application of whiskey and presents of flashlights and knives would he consent to show me his model for the figure on the totem pole. We crossed onto a small glacier nearby, climbed a cliff to a wide ledge some thirty feet from the ground. And as I pulled myself up onto the ledge, I had the shock of my life. Staring at me out of a wall of clear ice was the great-granddaddy of all dragon-flies! A Jurassic monster which, like the Russian mammoth, had ventured too far north, been trapped by a blizzard and entombed in ice!"

"You have it?" Ames leaned forward eagerly.

\* Remarkable instances of such enormous insects as this are Briarhart's protodonata from the Rhine valley; and the famous Solenhofen specimens.—Ed.

"Such a specimen would be priceless!"

"Let me finish!" Emmanuel Barr said slowly. "I took an axe, cut out a fifty-pound block of ice containing the huge dragon-fly. Put it on my dog-sled and headed for Nome. Fortunately the weather was cold and there was no danger of the ice melting. And I kept the block covered by a blanket, not wishing my discovery to be known. At Nome I packed the big piece of ice in 'dry ice,' took it south by plane to my home here. The big dragon-fly had still to be exposed to the air."

Barr paused, gazed at his guest a moment in silence. "Are you familiar with the work of Dr. Basile J. Luyot at St. Louis University? If so, you will recall his experiments in freezing and reviving living cell tissue, pieces of onion skin.\* I was familiar with these experiments and determined to try them on my prehistoric dragon-fly. On the third of this month . . ."

A PITTYING smile crept about the corners of Dr. Ames' mouth. The man was, of course, insane. He was hinting at fantastic impossibilities. And his story had seemed so plausible . . . Ames glanced pointedly at his watch, stood up.

"So sorry," he murmured. "An important engagement . . ."

"Wait a minute!" Barr's muscular fingers locked about the doctor's arm. "Before you go I've something to show you!" Politely but firmly he led his guest through the house, onto the little stretch of grass behind it.

Dr. Ames, panicky in the man's strong grip, glanced about, seeking some means of escape. Upon the lawn before him he noticed an oblong coffin-shaped object, covered by a tarpaulin. From beneath the cover came a loud droning sound, like the whirr of a motor, that inexplicably sent a chill of horror along his spine.

"So!" Barr laughed harshly, seized a corner of the tarpaulin. "Crazy, am I! Look!" With a swift movement he jerked the canvas covering away.

Watching, Dr. Ames gasped. The oblong box was of thick glass, like a show-case in a museum. And beneath the glass was an insect the like of which he had never in his wildest dreams imagined! Fully thirty inches long, from the cruel mouth to the tip of the horny, segmented tail, its bronze-green body had a lustrous metallic sheen. Great bottomless eyes stared unblinkingly at Ames, and the savage jaws moved slowly.

Suddenly its black iridescent wings became a blur and the loud ominous drone commenced again. Angrily, desperately, the huge creature raged against the reinforced glass walls of its prison, like a house-

\* Professor Alexander Goetz of the California Institute of Technology has done the same with yeast cells in his cyrogenic laboratory. And Dr. P. N. Kapterev of Moscow has revived plants frozen 10,000 years in Siberian wastelands. Germs found within the Wrangel Island mammoth have been brought back to life, while the Dutch Dr. DeLampie, using adrenalin and lymph, has placed human beings in a state of suspended animation.—Ed.

fly against a window pane. At length, exhausted, it drooped to the ground.

"An excellent specimen, eh?" Barr purred. "A female, yet quite as heavily armored as a male. Armed with a stinger in the ninth segment, something no true Odonata carries. Very deadly. One thrust from the stinger will kill a rabbit instantly. How do you like her?"

Ames, who had been bending over the glass case, straightened up, his eyes shining.

"Mr. Barr," he said solemnly, "this is the greatest moment in the history of entomology! A living specimen of the terrible prodonata that roamed the globe untold centuries ago! You are to be congratulated!" Hand extended, he sought to step forward. Something, however, seemed to be tugging at his trousers.

"Look out!" Barr screamed, plunging forward. "The door . . . !"

Ames glanced down. The cuff of his trousers had caught the latch of a small sliding door in the side of the glass case, had pulled it open! And a huge bronze-green shape was squeezing through the aperture!

"Shut it!" Barr cried desperately. "Quick! Before . . . !"

It was too late. The huge dragon-fly, its wings beating out a deep humming chord, soared skyward. Frantic, Barr lunged at it, and Ames could see the monstrous insect's tail brush against the Englishman's hand. A scream of pain broke from Barr's lips and he crumpled grotesquely to the ground.

Eyes wide with horror, Ames crouched by the glass case. For a long moment the great dragon-fly hovered motionless above them, then shot forward with incredible speed, disappeared into the distance.

"Barr!" Ames ran forward, bent over the inert figure. In the center of Barr's hand was a round red dot, a hole that might have been made by a knitting needle. A bluish streak ran up his arm and a queer swelling had already appeared on his wrist. With trembling fingers Ames felt the other man's pulse . . . and then sickening realization swept over him. The sting of the huge prehistoric insect was fatal! Emmanuel Barr was dead!

His face a grey, terrified mask, Dr. Ames stumbled toward his car.

## CHAPTER II

### The Insects Attack

AMES stood before the window of his study, staring with unseeing eyes at the modest array of brick buildings that constituted Western University. One thought hammered ceaselessly through his brain. He was to blame! Not only for permitting a priceless entymological specimen to escape, but for Barr's death as well. His stupid clumsiness . . .

Dr. Ames' glance fell to the newspaper in his hands. Black headlines danced before his eyes. "Scientist's

Death Still Mystery." The doctor shuddered. In the four weeks since Barr's death he had made no mention of the great prehistoric insect. To have gone to the police with the true story would have brought accusations of insanity. Not until the night-mare insect had been captured, or at least seen by reputable witnesses would he dare reveal . . .

A click of the door interrupted the doctor's troubled thoughts. Harkness, his lean, gangling assistant stood in the doorway.

"Looks like the farmers up around Indian Pond are still making apple jack," Harkness chuckled, tossing a letter onto the desk. "Here's one from a bohunk named Johansen who says something's been polishing off his cattle, leaving only bones! Wants the Natural History Department to send somebody up to find out what's doing it!"

"Wolves, perhaps," Dr. Ames shrugged. "That's pretty wild country."

"You don't know the half of it!" Harkness laughed. "According to Johansen, every time some of the cattle are knocked off, he hears a sound like a squadron of airplanes droning through the darkness! Talk about your d.t.'s!"

"Good God!" Ames' face grew chalky. The monstrous insect, Barr had said, was a female. What if she had been fertilized, full of eggs, before being entombed in the Alaskan glacier? And suppose during the month since Barr's death she had laid her eggs in Indian Pond, seen the devil's brood hatch, become hideous creatures like herself! Indeed, if the Carboniferous giants multiplied more rapidly than the present-day dragon-flies, there might be an immense swarm of the deadly, carnivorous insects, increasing with each day!

"Come on, Harkness!" Dr. Ames' leaped for the door. "We're going to Indian Pond! At once!"

Two hours later the doctor's car was rattling at breakneck speed along narrow country lanes, heading upstate. The sun had set and a veil of clouds blotted out both moon and stars. Only the twin beams of the car's headlights, the yellow windows of an occasional farmhouse, broke the darkness. Harkness, clutching the doorhandle to steady himself, stared in silent wonder at the grey little man behind the wheel. For two hours Ames had driven like an automaton, saying nothing, and Harkness was beginning to wonder what species of madness had gripped the usually timid, mild professor of Natural History.

Suddenly, as the car reached the crest of a small hill, Ames slowed down, pointed. In the valley lay a scattered village, its lights reflected in the small lake upon whose banks it clung.

"That Indian Pond," the doctor muttered. "Johansen's farm must lie on the other side of the lake, further back in the woods."

"Sure," Harkness nodded impatiently. "But what's it all about? Just because some dumb Swede writes that he hears airplanes . . ." He broke off suddenly, as the professor's fingers dug into his arm.

"Listen!" Ames' face was a ghastly grey. "Good God! Listen!"

Harkness sat motionless, holding his breath. All at once the hair at the back of his neck stiffened. Very faintly, seemingly miles away, he could hear a deep, vibrating drone! A drone that grew louder, more distinct, with each second, as though approaching at an unbelievable speed! Siren-like, ominous, somehow deadly, it was becoming well-nigh deafening!

"Quick!" Dr. Ames gasped. "Up with the windows! For your life's sake!"

**F**RANTICALLY Harkness twisted the crank, rolled up the car's windows. Nor was he a moment too soon. Hardly had they clicked into place when a shock like the blow of a sledge shook the car. Harkness had one fleeting glimpse of great goggle eyes, a cruel mouth, flattened against the rear window, before the glass started, cracked. The assistant professor sent up a mental prayer of thanksgiving to the inventor of shatter-proof glass.

Now more blows were shaking the old sedan, as the giant insects, sweeping downward with bullet-like velocity, crashed into it. The other windows cracked, the metal body of the car echoed beneath the blows like tin under a hammer. In the white beams of the headlights the two men could see a cloud of the huge dragon-flies, thousands of them, circling the car. Jaws agape, eyes flashing brilliantly, wings a misty blur, the creatures clustered about the car as moths cluster about a candle.

Dr. Ames, huddled behind the wheel, stared with tortured eyes at the big, bronze-green shapes. Another charge of their armored bodies against the weakened windows would surely shatter the cracked glass . . .

"What are they?" Harkness muttered. "I . . . I . . . never . . ."

"Dragon-flies! Protodonata!" Brokenly Ames gasped at his story.

"Good Lord!" The young assistant gazed in horrified fascination at the swarming shapes. "Insects . . . Ames! I've got it!" With a sudden lunge Harkness reached for the dashboard, switched off the lights. "You catch on? In spite of their size, they're still insects! And insects are attracted by light! Now that it's dark, maybe . . ."

Ames peered through the windshield into the blackness about them. The great shadowy shapes were still circling the car, but with less interest than before. No longer were the giant dragon-flies hurtling blindly, stupidly against it. All at once the thunderous drone began to die away, fade into the distance. With breath-taking speed the swarm of gigantic insects hurtled down into the valley!

"Gone! We're saved!" Cautiously Harkness stepped from the car. Suddenly he gasped. "Dr. Ames! Look! Indian Pond . . ."

The doctor stared down the long slope. A great

black cloud was settling over the little village, dimming its twinkling lights. One by one the street lamps winked out as the dragon-flies, diving with airplane speed, crashed into them. Now hoarse, frenzied shouts were audible above the deadly drone, along with the occasional roar of a shotgun. Helpless, sickened, the two men watched the last lights of the village disappear. The hum of wings subsided into a menacing silence.

"Wiped out!" Dr. Ames moaned. "Indian Pond . . . destroyed!"

As he spoke, the vibrating roar again arose. An immense black blot appeared against the grey clouds, and a straggling ray of moonlight broke through to strike green fire from a myriad soaring bodies. Twice the swarm of giant dragon-flies circled the village, as though in triumph, then wheeled off to the right. A moment later they had disappeared in the darkness.

"Come on! It's safe to use our headlights now!" Harkness dashed toward the battered car. "We may be able to help . . ."

Dazedly Dr. Ames climbed into the seat. The irony, the tragedy of it appalled him. But for the cuff of his trousers, a few strands of cloth, catching the bolt of Barr's reinforced glass case, he might be an honored figure in the field of entomology, writing monographs on prehistoric hexapoda. And instead, he had been responsible for Barr's death, the massacre at Indian Pond, had unleashed a terrible menace upon the world! An abject figure, Dr. Ames headed the car toward the silent village.

**I**NDIAN POND was a scene of utter desolation.

Broken glass from windows littered the streets, while here and there, scarcely recognizable as human beings, lay bloated, grotesque forms, swollen by countless deadly stings. More horrible still were the heaps of red grubs which indicated where the giant carnivorous insects had fed. Striking with terrible swiftness, smashing through fragile window panes to enter houses, the savage insects had brought instant death to the five hundred souls that made up Indian Pond.

"Good God!" Harkness whispered. "No . . . no one left!"

Dr. Ames bowed his head. He was to blame! His clumsiness . . . Abruptly the little grey man straightened up.

"You stay here!" he snapped. "Do what you can, notify the state authorities! I'm going east, to Chicago! Perhaps, by giving my information to the entomologists there, working with them, I can figure out some way of stopping the dragon-flies!"

"But" . . . Harkness exclaimed, "the big bugs headed east too! At their speed they'll reach Chicago before you! And if by some miracle you did overtake them, they'd finish you in five minutes!"

"No!" Dr. Ames shook his head. "The present day Libellula frequently travels in immense migratory swarms just as these prehistoric creatures are doing! And in spite of their tremendous individual speed,

such swarms move slowly. Stopping to forage, to breed . . . back-tracking, swinging off their course to make side excursions . . . Even though the insects can fly at a hundred or so miles an hour, a swarm shouldn't do better than a hundred a day. And as for running into them, I'll circle south, trust to luck . . ." He climbed into the old car, started its motor. "Good luck, Harkness! Get busy on the phone, spread the alarm! Good bye." Pressing the accelerator to the floor, Dr. Ames roared off into the night.

Dawn found the doctor only a hundred miles eastward. The mountainous country, his swing south, had lost time. Now, however, with only level plains before him, he hoped to gain several days on the swarming dragon-flies. And several days work in the great laboratories of Chicago might produce some method of destroying the winged death . . .

Already the alarm had been spread. In the hamlets through which he sped, Ames could see groups of early-rising country folk clustered about radios, anxiously scanning the sky. With only an occasional stop for gas and oil, Dr. Ames raced eastward.

It was about six a. m. when Ames heard it. Faint, distant, yet, growing louder with each instant . . . a vibrant, deep-pitched drone! Sick with apprehension the doctor twisted about in his seat, glanced up. High above the speeding car was a dark cloud, thousands upon thousands of the monstrous Jurassic insects darkening the sky! Green metallic bodies glistening in the sunlight, they swooped downward.

Dr. Ames groaned. No chance, now, of escape. His detour to the south had been futile! The swarm of insects made a dark canopy overhead, was diving down to investigate the moving automobile. Several of the cruel-eyed creatures were only a hundred feet above, and the cracked windows of the car could not withstand a second assault from these living battering rams. In another moment . . .

**S**UDDENLY Ames' ears detected a new sound. A deeper, more mechanical drone, cutting through the drone of the dragon-flies' wings. Curious, he peered through the starred glass. Big silvery shapes were speeding toward the horde of insects! Planes! Army planes, advancing to battle these invaders from the past!

The insects hovering above the car had risen, now, to meet their new antagonists. Watching, Ames saw a yellow cloud pour from the squadron of planes. Gas! Surely even the savage insects could not stand up against the deadly phosgene or mustard! Exultant, Ames watched the yellow plumes behind the on-rushing planes. In an instant the big bombers would be among the swarm of insects, spraying out gas . . .

Dr. Ames froze, eyes wide. A dozen of the dragon-flies, in advance of the swarm, had collided head-on with the foremost plane! And the plane was wobbling uncertainly, spinning to the ground! Sudden realization swept over Ames. Sure death to the insects that struck the plane . . . but a ten-pound, ar-

mored monster, hurtling at a hundred miles an hour against the bomber's propellers must inevitably shatter them, send the plane out of control, to earth! Agonized, he watched one plane after another fall, splinter into twisted heaps of wreckage.

The cloud of gas was being dissipated by the wind, now. A score, a hundred of the insects, inhaling the fumes, plummeted to earth. The rest, sensing danger, rose above the yellow mist, their deep drone echoing like a song of victory.

Then suddenly Ames was aware of khaki-clad figures on a nearby slope, of the long snouts of anti-aircraft guns thrusting above the waving fields of grain. One weapon destroyed, the national guardsmen were bringing another into play.

The khaki-clad figures were moving swiftly, now. All at once the bark of cannon rolled like angry thunder across the smiling Nebraksa countryside. Great black puffs of smoke appeared in the horde of insects, and dozens of the shiny green bodies fell to earth. Faster and faster the a. a. guns fired, taking no time to aim, while the chatter of machine guns added to the clamor. The torn, shattered bodies were falling faster, now; for a moment Ames felt a thrill of hope. And then the dragon-flies dove.

The battle ended abruptly. A few rounds from the cannon, a sputter of the machine-guns, and the entire encampment was hidden by a green, droning cloud of death. Ames, watching, could catch kaleidoscopic glimpses of the struggle. An officer emptying his revolver at a huge, black-winged brute. A soldier whirling his clubbed rifle in circles, seeking to keep off the deadly legions that pressed upon him from every side. A gunner, clutching his arm, pierced through coat and shirt by the needle-like stinger, reeling to the ground. Within ten minutes the huge mass of insects had risen, triumphant, from the little hill, were sweeping like a huge shadow toward the horizon.

Dr. Ames, a barren-eyed, despondent figure, watched the great swarm disappear in the distance. From the nearby hilltop came only silence; the long barrels of the anti-aircraft guns, rising above the wheat, pointed like warning fingers at the sky. One of the wrecked bombers was burning fiercely. With a shudder, Dr. Ames turned toward his car once more. As he did so, he noticed a tiny white butterfly blown by a sudden puff of wind against the steaming radiator of his car. No sooner did it strike the overheated metal than it fell to earth, dead. For a long moment Ames stared at the small white spot in the dust. A strong current of air . . . heat . . . Abruptly he straightened up, sprang into the car and a moment later was roaring at top speed eastward.

## CHAPTER III

### Last Stand At Chicago

**I**N a room atop Chicago's tallest skyscraper four men sat in hopeless, funereal silence. Illinois' gov-



ernor, Brann, Harrison Stokes, president of the Stokes Locomotive Company, Professor Madison of the Northwestern Natural History Department, and Colonel Campbell of the National Guard . . . these men formed the Chicago Emergency Council, virtual dictators of the city in this crisis.

Brann, standing by the window, stared down at the crowded street below. As far as the eye could see were long lines of cars, trucks, busses evacuating fugitives from the city. Workmen were busy boarding up doors and windows, while before the grocery shops were long queues of people determined to stock up on food in anticipation of a lengthy siege. The governor shook his head, wheeled about impatiently.

"Isn't there anything we can do?" he demanded. "Are we sure Chicago will be attacked?"

Professor Madison nodded somberly.

"The dragon-flies' migratory progress is fairly certain," he said. "In spite of all their halts and backtracking, they've been pushing steadily eastward. And Chicago is in line with their movement . . ."

Stokes thrust forward his muscular jaw.

"I agree with Brann," he exclaimed. "We've got to act! What's the good of barring windows, fleeing the city, when the damn bugs may decide to stay here? Or maybe return within a week! Might even lay eggs here to surprise us later. No matter what precautions we take, thousands must die, business will be at a standstill, and the property damage will be tremendous. Besides, at the rate they're multiplying, they'll soon spread over the entire earth! Already the death of cattle is causing a milk and meat shortage. And with farmers afraid to venture into the fields, we'll all starve! Now, there're only thousands, hundreds of thousands . . . in one swarm! If we wait until there's millions, billions, scattered over the entire earth, mankind is doomed! We've got to strike now, destroy them while we can!"

"How?" Colonel Campbell demanded wearily. "Planes are useless against them. And only yesterday the 30th anti-aircraft was wiped out. Even if we outfit the men with sting-proof armor, there's little hope. You can't aim or fire guns while insects the size of eagles are hurtling into you with sledge-hammer force. As for tanks, low-trajectory guns, they're about as useful as slingshots. Remember, these giant bugs are smart. Soon as one of 'em keeled over from that poisoned meat we set out, the rest of 'em wouldn't touch it!" The colonel paused as an orderly entered the room. "What now, Jamison?"

"A radio report from Ellersville, sir." The orderly laid a sheaf of papers upon the table. "Deaths now total eleven thousand, so far as we know. The swarm is nearing the Nebraska state line, heading due east. It's increasing rapidly in size and observers fear it will split up, scatter, shortly. And . . . oh, yes! There's a man been waiting to see you all morning. Asked me to give you this note." The orderly indicated one of the papers.

"Another crank, I suppose." Campbell unfolded the

letter, glanced at it, then sprang to his feet. "Brann! Stokes!" he roared. "Look at this! Ames, the chap who knew Barr, who accidentally released the first of the dragon-flies, is waiting outside! He knows more about this than anyone alive! Show him in, Jamison! Right away!"

THE orderly left and a moment later Dr. Ames entered the room. Eyes bloodshot, his slight frame bowed from twenty-four hours continuous driving, he stood like a gaunt scarecrow in the doorway.

"Dr. Ames!" Madison, the scientist, sprang forward, assisted him to a chair. "You know these other gentlemen? Governor Brann, Mr. Stokes, Colonel Campbell." He paused anxiously. "Have . . . have you found out anything about the protodonata that might help in destroying them? If we could only find a parasite . . ."

"No chance of that." Ames shook his head. "Any such natural enemy must have been extinct for millions. Which is doubtless why the dragon-flies have multiplied so rapidly." He hesitated, glancing through the windows at the fugitives in the streets . . . pathetic, pale-faced fugitives, clutching household treasures, gazing anxiously at the sky as they plodded eastward. "But I believe there is a method of destroying them! On my way here, I worked out a scheme which I think will succeed! Briefly, it is a trap!"

"A trap!" Governor Brann frowned. "But we've tried . . ."

"Let me finish!" Clutching the edge of the table, Ames began to speak. When he had concluded, a thoughtful silence fell over the room.

"Very interesting." Colonel Campbell nodded. "But how will you make sure they come near enough to your trap?"

"Simple," Ames exclaimed. "If they reach Chicago during the day, we'll use fresh-killed cattle to attract them . . . and if they come at night, we'll black out the city, use lights to draw them. After all, in spite of their size, the dragon-flies are still insects! Guns, planes, gas, and poison have failed. Why not give my method a try? The machines are simplicity itself. We have, I estimate, three days before the dragon-flies reach Chicago. With the entire resources of the city, with federal assistance, the machines can be built in that time. Unless we check them now, there is no hope for civilization. As soon as the swarm scatters, spreads over the continent, we are faced with extinction!"

"You're right!" Stokes cried. "Better to try Dr. Ames' traps, try anything, than do nothing! With the co-operation of the other manufacturing concerns in the city, my plant can turn out the machines in three days! What do you say, gentlemen?"

The others nodded, somewhat hopelessly.

"Right!" Stokes nodded. "I'll contact my plant, start work at once! God grant the plan succeeds!"

The next three days were a mad delirium to Dr.

Ames. Tired as he was, his presence was necessary in the big foundries, the machine-shops, to answer a thousand questions, to make a thousand calculations. Meetings with Colonel Campbell, with Governor Brann, with endless citizens' committees. Moreover, he found himself in constant danger from frenzied mobs who believed him to be the author of the disaster. As the evacuation proceeded, Chicago became a city of the dead, its transportation system halted, its streets empty, silent.

The news from the west was uniformly bad. The immense swarm of dragon-flies was increasing with each day, until it seemed endless. Towns and villages through the farmlands were awakened at night by a deep menacing drone, a drone that rose to a shrill scream as the huge insects dove upon the town. Many villagers, thus warned, fled to safety . . . but there were others less fortunate who awoke too late to escape the great green-winged monsters. Cattle everywhere were devoured by the carnivorous insects, while motorists, farmers who dared venture into the fields, fell victim to the droning death. In western Illinois a train was attacked, wrecked when engineer and fireman succumbed to the giant insects' stings. Everywhere in its wake the great horde left disaster.

During these three eventful days the Stokes plant was a turmoil of activity. Blast furnaces roared, trucks rumbled in and out, the clang of hammers and riveters was deafening. Their faces stamped with fear, the gangs of laborers worked like madmen. Sooty demons from the pit, they seemed to Dr. Ames, as, dwarfed by the immense masses of machinery, he watched the sprawling shadows dance over the walls of the plant.

BY sunset of the third day the titanic task was completed. On the lake front, looming large against the ruddy sunset, were twelve large cones, immense funnels, tapering down to long nozzles that bent, ran along the ground toward the water's edge. Thrusting high above the trees of Grant Park, they resembled twelve giant blunderbusses, aimed at the sky. At the point where the funnels narrowed down to their ten-foot pipes, wires led to great spark-gaps set in the sides of the tubes, while other wires from the city's power lines were connected to the large, powerful electric motors at the base of each funnel.

Some fifty feet behind this mass of apparatus was a small shack, a control station, completely surrounded by a network of heavy steel wire to act as a shield against the huge insects.

Five men stood beneath this dome of wire, silent, tense, their faces pale in the fading light.

"You think the motors are powerful enough?" Brann said suddenly.

"Hope so." Stokes shrugged. "Westinghouse sent them out by special train. They were the biggest they had on hand." He turned to Campbell, who was bending over a small radio. "Any news?"

"Little early." The colonel twisted a dial. "We

. . ." He broke off as an excited voice issued from the speaker.

"Post fourteen calling Colonel Campbell! Dragon-flies now passing above Maywood! Should be over city proper in five minutes! From our post here we can hear them clearly! The blackout of the city, the darkness, prevents closer observation, but I'm afraid some people must have been trapped in the streets! There are screams, groans, below us! The drone above continues endlessly. It seems as though the big bugs will never cease coming! There must be millions of them! Looks as though nothing can stop these devils! If the swarm ever breaks up . . ."

Colonel Campbell straightened up. Above the voice from the radio's speaker, a deep humming sound was audible! A humming sound that swelled to a thunderous roar!

"Quick!" Dr. Ames sprang to the array of dials and switches on the control panel. "They're coming!"

Stokes nodded, tugged at a lever. The drone was growing louder with each second as the vast cloud of prehistoric insects swept over the dark, silent city. Now they were above the towering skyscrapers, a cloud of droning death. . . .

SUDDENLY from the twelve bell-mouthed funnels white, dazzling light poured, and a roar, rivaling that of the dragon-flies, echoed along the lake-front. Ames, clutching the wire walls of their cage, stared with anxious eyes at the row of great cones. What if his plan failed? Soon the great migratory swarm of insects must break up, scatter, to form new colonies in every part of America, perhaps the world. Mankind would be forced to adopt heavy armor, to wage a ceaseless guerilla warfare against these killers from the dawn of time. Planes useless, travel at a standstill, starvation inevitable with the death of cattle, the danger of venturing into the fields. A breakdown of civilization. . . .

Ames studied the immense funnels, fearful of some flaw in his scheme. The light came from the great electric arcs that leaped in a blue-white flame across the tubular nozzles that led to the water's edge. And behind the searing arcs were big three-bladed propellers, whirling at airplane speed, sucking air with hurricane-like force down through the big funnels. It was ready, his trap. Would it work successfully? Destroy the terrible menace that had been resurrected from its icy tomb?

Impossible to tell how close the dragon-flies were now, for the roar of the electric motors, the whirling vanes, drowned out the sound of their wings. All at once Ames felt Professor Madison grip his arm, saw the scientist point skyward. In the light that streamed from the big cones a myriad of big glistening shapes were visible, thousands, hundreds of thousands, jaws agape, many-faceted eyes reflecting the white cold light. Ames held his breath. Would they be attracted by the light, come close enough to be

caught by the whirlwind of air being sucked through the cones?

As he watched, the horde of giant insects paused, began to circle lower. Ames gripped the wire cage until his knuckles were a row of white dots. His companions, standing behind him, were like pallid wraiths. If the creatures were suspicious, wary of the light . . .

Suddenly a score or so of the monstrous insects dove toward the mouth of the nearest funnel. As they approached it, they began to spin, whirl about. In vain they fluttered their powerful wings. The suction of the great vanes created a gale like that of a wind-funnel. Now the dragon-flies were at the neck of the nozzle, approaching the white-hot electric arc that flickered across the tube . . . an arc that even the tornado of wind could not blow out. Into it the insects plunged . . . and a moment later a cloud of fine black ash shot from the end of the nozzle to spray out over the lake.

Then more of the dragon-flies were swooping down toward the twelve big funnels, were being caught by the in-rush of air. No smell of blood to warn them away, and the white fascinating light to lure them like moths about a flame. More and more, sweeping down to investigate, were sucked through the great cone, into the deadly arc. The charred remains, ground to a fine powder by the spinning vanes of the propellers, poured like a dark smoke from the ends of the nozzles. Blundering, bumping into one another, the big green shapes followed the current of air toward

the deadly traps!

"It works!" Ames shouted. "Works! Thank God!"

The giant insects had intangibly sensed an enemy in the funnels, now, were diving upon them blindly, as they had dived upon the anti-aircraft guns. Obeying some strange mass instinct they were plunging to the attack. The cones were choked with greenish bodies . . . bodies to be drawn inexorably into the crackling arcs.

In an amazingly short time it was over. The last of the vast horde shot downward, following the migratory impulse which had kept the swarm together. Now the pitiful remainder of the great droning cloud were revealed in the light of the arcs, fluttering vainly against the suction of the propellers. An instant later they too had disappeared and there was only a black pall of dust hanging like some immense thundercloud over the lake.

"Gone!" Governor Brann exclaimed. "All of them! We . . . we've won! It was an inspiration on your part, Ames, these suction funnels!"

The little gray man said nothing. The irony of it all somehow shook him. A few strands of wool, a trousers' cuff, had released a terrifying menace upon the world . . . and a small white butterfly, blown against the radiator of a car, had saved it.

"'Not a sparrow falls,'" he quoted absently, staring at the dark cloud of dust. "Guess we can turn the motors off now, eh, Mr. Stokes?"

## ★ SPRING FEVER ★ IN THE LABORATORY

**S**CIENTISTS, like everyone else, get spring fever. That's the strange seasonal malady when you feel logy, lazy and—sometimes—in love! But scientists, unlike the rest of us, do something about it. In the laboratory, that is.

It's all due to an increased volume of blood in the system, they tell us now. Our bodies are gradually heated up by the warm weather. So our blood-manufacturing systems make up an extra pint or two to help cool us inside!

To find out these facts, one scientific martyr deliberately courted spring fever in the dead of winter! Outside it was bitter cold; in his air-conditioned laboratory the temperature hung around 90°. During the first week he felt drowsy, his ankles and feet be-

gan to swell, he was mentally dull. But at the end of ten days the artificial spring had increased his blood a fifth to a third in volume! His laziness passed, his swollen ankles subsided, his mind woke up.

As did perhaps his young man's fancy! That information was not included in his scientific report, but increased circulation is known to stimulate the activity of the ductless sex glands. Turning us "to thoughts of love."

Sulphur and molasses was the old-fashioned treatment in such cases. Though we used to make fun of it as a remedy for romance, it does act to thin the blood—thus assuaging the melancholy effects of spring fever! At least the laboratory variety.

# ROMANCE OF THE ELEMENTS.....Antimony

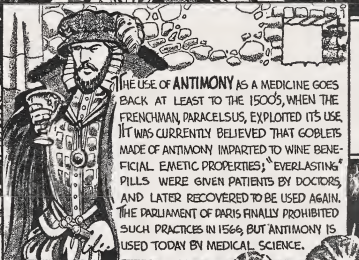
## FROM BIBLICAL TIMES THE SULPHIDE OF **ANTIMONY**

(STIBNITE) HAS BEEN AN INDISPENSIBLE BEAUTY AID TO FASHIONABLE LADIES OF THE EAST WHO USED IT TO PAINT EYE-BROWS AND EYELASHES AND TO GIVE LUSTRE TO THEIR EYES.



## THE FIRST ALCOHOL WAS NOT A SPIRIT!

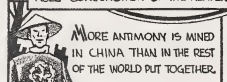
ORIGINALLY, ALCOHOL WAS SPELLED "AL KOHL" AND WAS A NAME GIVEN FINE POWDER BY ARAB SCIENTISTS. IT WAS USED PARTICULARLY TO DESIGNATE ANTIMONY SULPHIDE. NOT UNTIL LATER DID ALCOHOL BECOME THE NAME OF THE SPIRIT OF WINE.



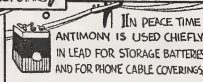
THE USE OF ANTIMONY AS A MEDICINE GOES BACK AT LEAST TO THE 1500S, WHEN THE FRENCHMAN, PARACELSUS, EXPLOITED ITS USE. IT WAS CURRENTLY BELIEVED THAT GOBLETS MADE OF ANTIMONY IMPARTED TO WINE BENEFICIAL EMETIC PROPERTIES; "EVERLASTING" PILLS WERE GIVEN PATIENTS BY DOCTORS, AND LATER RECOVERED TO BE USED AGAIN. THE PARLIAMENT OF PARIS FINALLY PROHIBITED SUCH PRACTICES IN 1566, BUT ANTIMONY IS USED TODAY BY MEDICAL SCIENCE.

★ ★ ★ **PURE METALLIC ANTIMONY** PROPERLY REDUCED, HAS A SURFACE THAT'S STUDDED WITH A PATTERN OF FERN-LIKE "STARS". WHEN MEDIEVAL ALCHEMISTS ACHIEVED "STARRED" ANTIMONY, THEY STOUTLY MAINTAINED THE PHENOMENON WAS CAUSED BY "THE FAVORABLE CONJUNCTION OF THE HEAVENLY STARS".

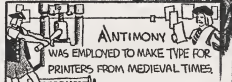
**ANTIMONY** USED IN SHRAPNEL BULLETS GIVES THEM THE HARDNESS TO KEEP THEIR SPHERICAL SHAPE WHEN THE SHELL BURSTS. THE GREAT WAR RAISED ANTIMONY PRODUCTION FROM A MINOR TO A MAJOR INDUSTRY.



**MORE ANTIMONY IS MINED IN CHINA THAN IN THE REST OF THE WORLD PUT TOGETHER.**



**IN PEACE TIME ANTIMONY IS USED CHIEFLY IN LEAD FOR STORAGE BATTERIES AND FOR PHONE CABLE COVERINGS.**



**ANTIMONY WAS EMPLOYED TO MAKE TYPE FOR PRINTERS FROM MEDIEVAL TIMES.**

**A**NTIMONY is number 51 in the International Table of Atomic Weights of the Chemical Elements. Its symbol is Sb and its atomic weight is 121.77. It is a hard, brittle silver-white crystalline solid, having a specific gravity of 6.7 and a melting point of 630°. Antimony forms alloys with most heavy metals and the

alloys are harder than the pure metals. It is used in the making of type-metal; Britannia metal, used in making cheap table-ware; Babbitt metal for antifriction purposes; is employed in making opaque white enamel for sanitary ware. Antimony sulfide is used in matches, and as a component of primers in shells and cartridges.



# Quiz Page

THE following quiz has been prepared as a pleasant means of testing your knowledge of things fantastic and scientific. We offer it solely for the pleasure it gives you, and with the hope that it will provide you with many bits of information that will help you to enjoy the stories in this magazine. If you rate 60% correct in your answers, you are considerably ahead of the average.

## LOVE AND ASTRONOMY

Find the errors (6), in the following:

The young astronomer had been sent to observe one of those rare total eclipses of the sun when the moon is in apogee. As he sped towards the station on his return trip, he mentally refigured the speed of the umbra of the moon's shadow as it swept westward. Suddenly he remembered the walk in the garden the evening after the eclipse, with the farmer's daughter, and how she had admired the full moon, that neighboring planet separated from us by 248,500 miles. The taxi lurched around a corner and he saw the station before him. He was late—the train was already underway, the steam from the exhaust obscuring the wheels.

## QUESTION BOX

1. What is the octane number of a gasoline?
2. What is the incidence in an aeroplane?
3. What kind of engines are used by a submarine under water?
4. How many eclipses may there be in a year?
5. For what purpose were obelisks erected?

## TRUE AND FALSE

1. Nebulae are luminous masses of gas. True..... False.....
2. A tri-polar motor is self-starting. True..... False.....
3. A longeron is the lower aileron in a biplane. True..... False.....
4. Gamosepalous is a skin disease. True..... False.....
5. The paper of this magazine is composed of pulp containing a greater percentage of ground wood pulp than sulphite pulp. True..... False.....
6. Cirrus clouds are composed of fine particles of ice. True..... False.....
7. A culverine is a small culvert. True..... False.....
8. Icebergs are formed by the breaking up of the ice that surrounds the North Pole. True..... False.....
9. A septuagenarian is a man between seventy and eighty years of age. True..... False.....
10. When one aeroplane overtakes another, the over-

taking plane must alter its course to the right. True..... False.....

11. The femur is the thighbone. True..... False.....
12. An octant is used by aviators. True..... False.....
13. A theodolite is a man learned in theology. True..... False.....
14. The pyramid of Cheops was so constructed that the star Capella at transit shone down the ventilating shaft to the burial chamber. True..... False.....
15. Cellophane and artificial silk can both be made of bleached sulphite pulp. True..... False.....

## STAR DUST

1. In what constellation is Arcturus?
2. Name the largest moon of each planet.
3. What race developed the science of astronomy from Astrology?
4. What is meant by the rays and rills of the moon?
5. Name the largest asteroid.

## STRIKE OUT THE WORD THAT DOES NOT CONFORM

1. Elevator, wing, radiator, rudder, differential.
2. Corolla, sepals, stamens, pistil, bark.
3. Brig, clipper, bark, sloop, galleon.
4. Poplar, birch, pine, spruce, cedar.
5. Shale, sandstone, granite, conglomerate, limestone.

## SCRAMBLED WORDS

1. Crater on the moon. TLOAP .....
2. Part of an aeroplane. ASUFGELE .....
3. A satellite of one of the planets. DELENCASU .....
4. North American animal. SOMOE .....
5. An alloy of copper and zinc. RABSS .....

## WHAT DID HE SAY?

Several years ago, an old man died, leaving a strange will. This man owned a stable of racing horses. He also had two sons, each of which had a horse. These two sons continually quarreled over whose horse was fastest. When the will was read, it was found that everything was to go to the son whose horse was slowest. In the subsequent race to determine which horse was slower, the end of a day found the two sons only a few miles away and they decided to encamp for the night. A passerby, in curiosity asked what they were doing, and upon explanation, said two words which caused the two brothers to mount and rush madly away. What were those two words?

# »»» Introducing ««« THE AUTHOR

## NAT SCHACHNER

### Author of CITY UNDER THE SEA

**S**TARTED a Jack-of-all-trades career by majoring in chemistry at college. Was research chemist for private manufacturing concerns and food and drug expert for the New York Board of Health. Landed in the World War in the Chemical Warfare Service, Gas and Flame Division, and managed to be one of the few who weren't carried out feet first. Decided to try law as more exciting after the Armistice, and remained fairly well put for some fifteen years. Back in 1930 wrote my first story on a bet—had never read a pulp before that—and much to my surprise, it was accepted. The magazine was *AMAZING*. Liked the idea and wrote more and more until my stenographer objected. Typing manuscripts she had no time for law briefs. I decided therefore to drop the law. But even in writing I can't stay put. I alternate fantastics, detectives, etc., with such stuff as a biography of Aaron Burr, a deadly serious volume on the Medieval Universities, articles for magazines like *American Mercury*, etc., and am now involved in a book on Alexander Hamilton. But all along what I really wanted to be was an astronomer.—*Nat Schachner, New York, N. Y.*

## F. ORLIN TREMAINE

### Author of GOLDEN GIRL OF KALENDAR

**I** WAS born in the parsonage of my father's first church, at Harrisville, N. Y., a little village in the Adirondack Mountains in New York State. My family background is completely American Colonial, two of my ancestors having arrived on the Mayflower in 1620, and forty others were in New England before 1670. Among them were Puritan Elders, the first shipbuilder of New London, Connecticut, and his son-in-law who built many of the colonial barques and vessels which plied the coast in trade. In succeeding generations the family moved to the "West" as far as central New York State where a huge grant of acreage was given them for services in the American Revolution.

Out of this background has come my love of the sea, and the woods, and the country. To me a city is a "trading post" which has outgrown its purpose!

Have traveled in almost every state east of the Rockies, and in Canada and Mexico. Born January 7, 1899. Graduated from High School 1915. Served in the American Army as private and non-commissioned officer, 30th Cavalry, and 51st Heavy Field Artillery, 1918. Graduated from Valparaiso University 1921.

Associate Editor "The Eastern Underwriter" 1921-22. Managing Editor of several of the Macfadden magazines, including "Metropolitan" and "True Romances" and "True Story." Also banding typography for most of the line, makeup, styling, etc. Was Editor of "True Story" when it attained its first 2,000,000 copy editions. 1923-24.

Editor and Managing Editor, "The Smart Set" (Hearst) while it grew from 26,000 to 487,000 net paid circulation. 1924-26.

Accepted a position in connection with a big printing establishment which proposed producing my own magazines, but gave up the idea in favor of writing after a year of effort.

Sold two textbooks on story-writing, one newspaper serial story (King Features) and upward of fifty short stories; articles and verse. 1927-28.

Editor in the Clayton Magazine organization, 1929-30. Editor, "Everybody's Magazine," 1931.

Editor-in-Chief, production manager, and director, "The Clayton Magazines"—1932-33.

Editor and Assistant Editor-in-Chief, "The Street & Smith Publications," 1933-38. During four of those last five years I was the active editor of "Astounding." Reestablishing the magazine after a year's lapse and moving it to a position of economic stability.

When the supervising editorial positions were eliminated from the Street & Smith organization, May 1st, 1938, I went to our home in the mountains for my first real vacation in many years.

Spent six months in the woods, and on the mountain, and delving into the extensive scientific and historical library which is an inheritance. Incidentally, became an amateur movie fan, and this new interest now vies with trout-fishing as my favorite pastime!

Returned to New York for the winter. Am working on the things in which I am most interested. These include writing science-fiction and fantasy.—*F. Orlin Tremaine.*

## F. A. KUMMER, JR.

### Author of THE INSECT INVASION

**T**HE INSECT INVASION was the result of newspaper articles concerning the great mammoth found perfectly preserved in a glacier on Wrangel Island by a Russian expedition. Except for minor portions of the body, which had decayed, the mastodon was precisely as it had been when trapped by arctic blizzards, buried in snow. As time passed, this snow hardened to ice and the great creature lay for millenniums in nature's refrigerator until discovered a year or so ago. The Russians, placing it in a refrigerator-ship, carried it to Moscow. Then, some months later, came another startling dispatch. Russian scientists were attempting to revive germs found within the mammoth's body . . . germs of another generation, from the dawn of time!

In the field of suspended animation by freezing, we are making greater strides every day. The revival of the mammoth's germs, the reanimation of plants frozen for thousands of years in arctic soil, the freezing of blood for possible transfusions . . . all these speak of great things to come. And if Dr. DeLamp's discoveries are accredited, suspended animation is here. In our own lifetime we may see human beings frozen, to wake up in another generation, or placed in suspended animation to make a trip across space. There can be no limit to man's achievements so long as he has dreams to translate into realities.—*Frederic Arnold Kummer, Jr.*

## EANDO BINDER

### Author of THE MAN WHO SAW TOO LATE

**T**HE basic idea for "delayed vision" was suggested to me by Robert Swisher, professional research chemist and also a science-fiction fan of long standing. Speaking for all authors, there are times when story-ideas come hard and it is like manna from Heaven to have some kind soul drop one in your lap. Bob, I salute you!

Bob had had the intriguing thought of what it would mean if some poor mortal found his brain "seeing" three minutes behind his eyes. Unholy affliction! To write the story, I found it necessary to put myself in the place of the victim of this delayed vision. How would things look to him? What puzzling situations would he find himself in? How much of a handicap would it be? A pretty hellish one, I decided. You come to realize that the more you think about it. It was not so much a matter of using imagination as reason. The whole set of complications would be definite and logical, not any fancy that came to mind.—*Eando Binder.*

## QUIZ PAGE ANSWERS

(Quiz on Page 90)

### LOVE AND ASTRONOMY ERRORS

1. When the moon is in apogee there can be no total eclipse of the sun. The eclipse would be annular.
2. The umbra of the moon's shadow moves eastward.
3. There can be no full moon the evening after the eclipse.
4. The moon is a satellite, not a planet.
5. Steam is invisible; what he saw was condensed water vapor.
6. The exhaust in a steam engine is piped into the smoke box and escapes by way of the smoke stack.

### TRUE AND FALSE

1. False—many are composed of stars and many are not luminous.
2. True.
3. False—a longeron is one of the main parts in the body of a plane.
4. False—plants that have their petals joined are said to be gamosepalous.
5. True—about 80%.
6. True.
7. False—a culverine is an old type of cannon.
8. False—icebergs are formed by pieces breaking off from glaciers in Greenland, Baffin Is., etc.; flocs are formed by the breaking up of N.P. ice.
9. True.
10. True.
11. True.
12. True—it is used in navigation.

13. False—it is an instrument to measure angles.
14. False—the star is Sirius. Polaris also shines down the main opening to the burial chamber at its lower transit.
15. True.

### QUESTION BOX

1. The octane number of a gasoline is the percentage of iso-octane in a blend of iso-octane and normal heptane that would exactly match the anti-knock performance of a gasoline being tested.
2. It is the angle the wing makes with the horizon.
3. Electric under water; diesel on the surface.
4. Seven—five solar and two lunar.
5. To tell the time.

### STAR DUST

1. Bootes.
2. Luna, Phobos, Ganymede, Titan, Titania, and Triton.
3. The Greeks.
4. Rays are bright streaks which radiate from points near a few of the craters. Rills are clefts or cracks on the moon's surface.
5. Ceres—dia. 485 miles.

### STRIKE OUT THE WORD THAT DOES NOT CONFORM

1. Differential.
2. Bark.
3. Sloop.
4. Birch.
5. Granite.

### SCRAMBLED WORDS

1. PLATO.
2. FUSELAGE.
3. ENCELADUS.
4. MOOSE.
5. BRASS.

### WHAT DID HE SAY?

Change horses.

# THE MOST SENSATIONAL STORY EVER PRESENTED!

• CBS refused to air it. The Federal Communications Commission suppressed all similar stories from the air. This in spite of the fact that it is one of the finest and most originally presented science fiction and fantastic stories ever written. Its scope is magnificent. Its concept daring. Its science tremendous. And its truth . . . we dare not make a definite statement, other than that we present it for you to pass judgment. Whether fiction or fact, we present it purely for your entertainment, and to prevent the loss of this amazing manuscript of imaginative literature.

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## AMAZING STORIES

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# READER'S PAGE

## TOPS!

Sirs:

Your magazine is tops! I have just finished the second issue. I like the large size and smooth edges. Your authors are swell too. Leo Morey and Frank Paul are fine cover artists.

I am keeping my issues filed so will you please excuse me from not sending the coupon for favorite stories, as I don't want to cut up the magazine.

Keep up the good work. I think the magazine is perfect, so keep it as it is.

Keith Hickman,  
738 W. Main St.,  
Napoleon, Ohio.

## ONLY ONE DISLIKE

Sirs:

Volume 1, No. 2 of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES exceeds the first issue only in features. The only thing that I don't like about your magazine is the bi-monthly idea.

Mike Lewin,  
402 Bowdoin Pl.,  
Seattle, Wash.

## THE EDITOR GETS HIS

Sirs:

You claim this magazine to be the tops in the scientific world along with the AMAZING. If you can't find better stories than the ones recently put out (some of them anyway) I'd say you're a poor Editor.

AMAZING, the ace of them all, yet you dare put FANTASTIC ADVENTURES on a level with it. Excellent features (most of them). Back covers, too, good. If you put out the worst stories on the market I'll buy FANTASTIC because of the back cover. But I wouldn't pay a nickel for half of the stories.

Please get us away from the earth. Give us more Interplanetary yarns, astronomically inclined people would sure go for them. I should think all readers would. Astronomy is after all the most beautiful and the most awe-inspiring of all sciences.

Romeo Fascione,  
3826 E. 144th St.,  
Cleveland, Ohio.

## CURIOUS

Sirs:

Congrats on the new magazine, FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. I have just finished your second magazine and find them all a real treat. I ate 'em up so fast that for the second time now I must suffer another full seven weeks ere I can once again feast my eyes on a real treat. I agree with Julius Unger that you put it out every month instead of bi-monthly.

I am curious to know what the people (if you can call them that) of all the planets look like—even though they are imaginary drawings. Paul is great. Stick to the large size magazine.

How about stories dealing with long extinct animals? Weird stories would help a lot; also, mystery (not detective) stories.

By the way, now that I am acquainted with most of the planets, the moons, and suns, how about acquainting me with our nearest neighbor, the clouds?

Sidney Plotkin.

● We are glad to note how popular Paul's planet inhabitant series is becoming. It certainly is true that we are all curious as to what

they the creatures of other worlds look like, even if only in imagination, based on the meagre facts we know.

We've treated the stratosphere in past articles, and a bit about clouds in those. However, we may present a more comprehensive article on atmosphere and clouds very soon.—Ed.

## WANTS VIOLET RAY & KIRK

Sirs:

I have read all your issues up to date and have been very well pleased with them. This book or magazine ranks equally in my estimation with AMAZING STORIES which is supposed to be one of the leading magazines of its kind, I believe.

For the past week I have been suffering from an illness which confines me to my bed. I have enjoyed reading your latest issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES more than any other magazine.

Enclosed you will find how I rated this issue's stories. I certainly want to see more stories about Violet Ray and Kirk the Wanderer. The stories of Burroughs and Repp are so equally interesting that I just marked the first story I came to first and the next one next. As it happened Burroughs' story came before Repp's, so of course I listed his first.

W. R. Resler,  
U. S. S. Utah, A Div.,  
Bremerton, Wash.

● We promise you there'll be more about Violet Ray, and Kirk the Wanderer in the future.—Ed.

## A "NOISY" READER

Sirs:

Just got July Fantastic. Had quite a nostalgic attack over Morey's painting although he has done better. Some of his old-timers for the old Amazing were tops in the sf field.

By all means chain Paul to a post and keep him coming. Notwithstanding Señor Bristol's burp in the new Fantastic, Paul is one of the best of artists on two legs. His back cover series is swell.

My only bone to pick with Paul is that the Venusians, despite their "low intelligences," managed to build quite a spiffy house.

Stories coming up—the second issue of Fantastic doesn't rate with the first. Even Burroughs was sort of a disappointment. I enjoy his Martian and Pellucidar books greatly but "The Scientists Revolt" fell flat as a pancake with me. Friend Ed's beautifully realistic descriptive work and strong characterization are notably absent. I'll be generous and give it three rather faint meows.

Kummer's first Lemuria story hit the spot with me but this second—well—it gets one squeak because the idea was interesting.

Fearn's yarn was good—he never lets up in quality. See him about quantity, Mr. Editor. One bellow.

"The Golden Amazon" was also good. Would like to see more of Violet Ray. One bellow.

Ed Earl Repp comes up with a topper. One lustrous shriek. Illustrations coming up—Krupa's drawing for Burroughs' yarn was excellent, one of his most nifty to date. The second drawing for "The Golden Amazon" was also good. These two together earn Krupa slightly more than a bellow.

Jay Jackson has a refreshing style but give him some anatomical lessons. Fuqua's drawing for Kummer's story gets six meows while Jackson tails him with five meows.

"Monster from Nowhere." Give Mr. Bond two shrieks in each ear and my congratulations.

And of course, Morey—what more can be said than to give him a lusty shriek with a surplus of nine meows?

See you next month. . . .

Jerry Bizby,  
New York.



## GET A ROYAL

"BIGGEST HELP that ever came into our house—sent me time with my reports and letters (I'm a salesman)... my wife uses it for her correspondence... As for the children, you should see their home-work now—now, business like—they both type like streaks—in fact, we all do!"

## PORTABLE ON

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**ORIGINAL POEMS, SONGS for PUBLICATION and RADIO**  
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Dept. 600, St. Louis, Mo.

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Mother, Home, Love, Patriotic, Sacred, Comic or any subject.  
Don't delay—send your poem today for immediate consideration.  
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## GONE TO "NOWHERE"

Sirs:

I have now read both copies of your FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and want to say that they are in plain English, swell.

"Intrigue in Lemuria" was, by far, the best. However, you can take "The Monster from Nowhere" and drop it down the deepest shaft that you can find. Preferably an oil well. Maybe I'm sort of dense, but I simply can't imagine myself walking around on a sheet of paper with my six foot four inch height gone to "Nowhere."

I'm glad to see that you have put clothes back on the characters. When I first opened your magazine last time I thought I was looking into a book on "How to Live in a Nudist Colony in Ten Easy Lessons" instead of a Science-Fiction book. Now for the back cover, Paul is, without a doubt, the best artist of them all. But did he have to be so free with his lipstick? All those Venusians seem to be expecting to be kissed by the nearest Earthman any minute.

Say, who was the bird who squeezed the pickle on your first issue? He must sleep with a lemon in his mouth.

I want also to put in my bid for less bill-boarding on the front. We'll find out what is on the inside when we open up.

Geo. Hrebec,  
607 Theresa St.,  
Austin, Texas.

● We are sorry Bond's story didn't get by you. But we might explain that no "walking about on paper with height gone to nowhere" was supposed to be inferred from this yarn. The creature from the fourth dimension hadn't lost its height, but to our three dimensional vision, we could only see a *cross-section* so to speak. Just as a paper-thin slice of your body would appear.—Ed.

## CAN'T HELP BELIEVING

Sirs:

I could not just send this coupon without saying something about your swell magazine.

I have read both issues of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and I am going to keep on doing so, or else!!!!

The stories in your magazine are written in such a fascinating way that one cannot help liking or believing the stories. I have no doubt in my mind as to the possibility of such adventures in the near future, with one exception. I do not believe that interplanetary travel will come into existence.

The thing that won me over to a FANTASTIC fan even after two issues was the rear cover. Paul has a vivid conception of planetary personages or things. Keep up the good work.

Gordon Powley,  
Weyburn, Sask., Canada

● It certainly pleases us to know that you can read FANTASTIC ADVENTURES with enough credence to make it seem possible. We've succeeded in our attempt to make them sound convincing, if we can get you to do that.—Ed.

## FINEST ADVENTURE WRITER

Sirs:

Congratulations on getting the finest adventure writer possible—Edgar Rice Burroughs. His novel outranks the rest.

Alfred Richard,  
Bronx, N. Y.

## ENJOYS SCIENCE FICTION

Sirs:

First let me state that the July edition of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is the most interesting, exciting, and best-written science-fiction magazine I have ever read. Perhaps my ideas are worth very little as I am only eighteen, graduating from high school this June. I am a very earnest student of all branches of science. I have done much more extensive reading and studying of science than most boys of my age. I get a great deal of enjoyment from science-fiction. I have read many of your AMAZING STORIES which rank next to FANTASTIC ADVENTURES in my mind. May I make a couple of suggestions?

First: put FANTASTIC ADVENTURES on the stands each month instead of bi-monthly. Second: tell Burroughs, Ayre and Repp to keep up the good work. Third: if possible let's have a story based on evolution, a subject in which I am very much interested.

I enjoy Paul very much and am starting a collection of his masterpieces. Keep him around.

I have found your quiz page very helpful. I keep all the questions and answers on file.

Edward L. Robinson,  
66 Lancaster St.,  
Albany, N. Y.

## EXPECT "FAIRY TALES"?

Sirs:

Everything about the companion magazine to AMAZING STORIES you gave us, is swell, except the name, FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. If you weren't acquainted with the magazine and someone gave you a copy, what type of stories would you expect therein? Science? Hardly. I would expect fairy tales and I believe I speak for many other readers, too. How about it, fans?

Get more interplanetary stories and have Mr. Paul illustrate them.

Douglas Sheeley,  
301 23rd St.,  
Denver, Colo.

● Really, the modern science fiction story is a stream-lined "fairy tale." So, you aren't far wrong. No, we don't expect the old type of fairy tale, but stories of imagination might be classed as such. Fantastic means what it implies, in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, and adventures are exactly what these stories are. Adventure with a real bite, a new, salty tang of science and fantasy to make them interesting.—Ed.

## TWICE A MONTH!

Sirs:

Your magazine is the berries, but I

got one kick and that is: you take too gosh darn long between magazines.

Julius Unger's idea of having the magazine every month is pretty good, but I rather have it twice a month. I go bats waiting for the next magazine. I'm for FANTASTIC all the way. Keep up the good work.

Rubin Silver,  
78 Maryland St.,  
Springfield, Mass.

## TWO GREAT SCIENCE-FICTION MAGAZINES

Sirs:

I would like to see FANTASTIC published monthly.

At present you have two great science-fiction magazines on the market. Keep up the swell back covers.

The last one on AMAZING is the type I like most—the future space suits, evolution of man, end of world, etc. More like the future ocean liner, etc.

Let's have covers like the one illustrating "World Without Women."

Bill Doyle,  
24 Winthrop St.  
Salem, Mass.

● We'll have a definite announcement in the very near future on all these demands for making FANTASTIC ADVENTURES a monthly magazine. Watch this column. Our series in FANTASTIC back covers will continue Paul's conception of life on various worlds, for the time being. Which gives us quite an imposing line-up of covers. AMAZING STORIES will continue to present its varied subjects on the back cover in contrast.—Ed

## MOREY ON MACHINERY

Sirs:

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is the best magazine to hit the stands in many a moon. You have outdone yourself in the second issue.

Burroughs' novel is up to his old stories. In fact every story is excellent. I certainly hope that Thornton Ayre will continue the adventures of Violet Ray and Chris Wilson.

The head illustrations for above and "Invaders from Sirius" are the best illustrations of machinery I've ever seen, but don't have Morey do figures. Don't use Jay Jackson.

S. Brown, Jr.,  
7 Arlington St.  
Cambridge, Mass.

## F.A. IN THE HOME

Sirs:

Personally I believe a magazine cannot be a superior publication until it has had time to "spread its wings."

Polite criticism is, when needed, good for anyone or anything, but I think T. Bruce Yerke went too far.

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is enjoyed a great deal in our home. The only complaint is FANTASTIC ADVENTURES should have two issues a month instead of one.

Please don't believe all Californians are such severe critics.

Lillian Wofford,  
215—19th St.  
Antioch, Calif.

## LONG NOVELS

Sirs:

The Burroughs' novel in the July issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES was just about tops. How about more long novels like it? I also liked "Invaders of Sirius" and thought it had a fine plot. I also agree that you should start publishing FANTASTIC ADVENTURES every month.

Fred Black,  
R. R. 5,  
Salem, Indiana.

Sirs:

This issue is far better than the first. Thanks for the variety of artists and the cover by Morey. Paul's series is coming along swell. Anyone who calls Paul a second-rate artist must be nuts. Please don't let Burroughs get away now that you've got him. How about getting him to do a Martian adventure or does ARGOSY have a monopoly on them?

How are the chances of seeing some serials soon? I've been waiting for them an awful long time. It's about time we got some.

Here's a list of authors I'd like to see in AMAZING STORIES and FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. I realize it's a long one and you can't secure them all, but I'm making it so long that you can get at least a few of them: S. P. Meek, Fletcher Pratt, John Taine, Williamson, Cummings, Kline, Kostkos, Leinster, Wates, Flagg, Merritt, Keller, E. E. Smith, C. A. Smith, Bob Olson, Aladra Septima, P. S. Miller, R. D. Miller, Stone, Sonnemann, Shays, Dr. Walter Rose, Burit, Russell, Connell, Schere, Schueler, Lemkin, Barnes, Wandrei, Hillard, Manning, Vaughan, Diffin, S. P. Wright, Starz, Winter, Gilmore, T. C. McClary, Gawan Edwards, Charles Cloukey, Walsh, Corbett, Nathanson, C. A. Moore, Kelly, Wede, Bates.

Among the artists that you're trying to secure I hope that you're trying to get Dold. He isn't illustrating at present. I'm glad you're trying to get Wesso and Finlay. They're tops. Schneeman also is a fine Science-Fiction illustrator.

Arthur Saha,  
2828 3rd Ave. E.,  
Hibbing, Minn.

● We publish your list of authors wanted for a distinct reason. We invite every author on that list to contribute. And we expect them to do so soon. The sooner every one of them has a yarn in the magazine, the better your editors will like it.

No, Argosy has no monopoly on Burroughs, and you can be sure we'll try to get him to contribute again in the near future.

Serials in a bi-monthly would be irksome, but keep up heart, fella. We'll get there eventually.—Ed.

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second issue was a 200% improvement over the initial one. All your stories rated high. Burroughs' detective story was the best of that type I have read. Can't you get some novels by the following old favorites, some of whom I haven't seen for a long while—A. Merritt, E. E. Smith, R. F. Starzl, William Lemkin, Cap. S. P. Meek and Murray Leinster. We would like that Taine story, too.

Your large size and PAUL's back cover series go over big. And as for "something new under the sun," why, FANTASTIC is the reincarnation of the '26-31 AMAZING. Bi-monthly. H-m-m-m, that could be improved. You might put out a Quarterly later, containing your really long novels and two or three short stories. Since AMAZING can't use Prof. Jameson any longer why not take over and give us some more of them? That would be very suitable for FANTASTIC.

Keep after Wesso and Finlay and get Paul to do an inside illustration once in a while. I liked the full page illustration by Morey. His covers were always good. His inside work has improved greatly too. Reeve and Jackson turned out some creditable work.

Yours very truly,  
G. O. Winston, Jr.  
3434 34th St., N.W.,  
Washington, D. C.

## A DIFFERENT MAGAZINE

Sirs:

I did not send my congratulations when the first issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES appeared because I was rather confused. I realized that you had every desire to please the average science fiction fan due to the fact that you had published a large-size magazine and

featured Paul on the back cover. However, the stories, to be perfectly frank, were pretty lousy!

Then came the surprising second issue. It actually seems like a different magazine. First of all, the cover illustration, although sloppily drawn, is an improvement over that of the initial issue only because it covers the entire cover. Paul's back cover is just a wee bit better than his first one, which makes it very excellent.

The stories can, with one exception, all be termed "science fiction." That one exception is Kummer's "Intrigue in Lemuria." The story that I thought best is "The Monster from Nowhere," by Nelson S. Bond, which is closely followed by "The Golden Amazon," by Thornton Ayre. Fearn's "She Walked Alone" closely follows the aforementioned two stories.

I was rather disappointed by Burroughs' "The Scientists' Revolt." It is not up to his usual standard. Why not have Edgar Rice do a yarn about John Carter of Mars? I suppose I'll have to give Burroughs fourth place because his story is better than Repp's "Invaders from Sirius," and Kummer's non-scientificational "Intrigue in Lemuria."

Your departments are all very good with "The Editor's Notebook," "Fantastic Hoaxes," "Introducing the Author," and "The Reader's Page," probably the best.

Concerning the art work; use Krupa, Paul, Wesso, Finlay, and Dold. You'll then have the best illustrated fantasy magazine.

Robert A. Madle,  
Editor, Fantastice Digest,  
333 E. Belgrade St.,  
Philadelphia Pa.

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# « « LIFE ON MERCURY » »

ON our back cover this month we present artist Frank R. Paul's conception of the sort of creature we might most logically expect to inhabit the planet Mercury, based on astronomical observations and scientific deductions of conditions on the world nearest the sun.

Owing to the proximity of the sun, and in spite of the extremely heavy atmospheric envelope around Mercury, the climate is bound to be extremely hot, and in a chaotic, stormy condition. It is reasonable that the Mercurian is a creature equipped to withstand the rigors of a rugged world.

More than likely he would be constructed along the lines of some of Earth's insects, heavily armored and insulated against heat, against the extreme power of ultra-violet light from the near sun, and against radiations which we do not receive on Earth. He would be extremely heavy, and only the light gravity of Mercury would permit this. On Earth, the Mercurian might have great difficulty in moving his armored body about. But on Mercury, in spite of almost armor-plate construction, he would possess enormous strength and be able to proceed from place to place on the chaotic surface of his world by enormous leaps and bounds, like a greatly magnified grass-hopper.

He would not be carnivorous, but would subsist on the

nut-like fruits of a hardy, heat-resistant vegetation, of a desert nature. He would be provided with strong jaws to crack the shells of such nut-fruits, and with strong pincer-like hands and claws to gather them from the bushes and trees on which they grew.

He would undoubtedly live underground, in an ant-like fashion, and would probably be highly specialized, with breeding, fighting, hunting types specially developed. Breeding prolifically would be necessary, due to the high death rate of a savage world.

An Earthman, visiting Mercury, would be forced to wear heavily insulated armor to withstand the heat, to fend off deadly radiations from the sun, and to keep out noxious gases. The atmosphere would be absolutely unfit for human lungs, and would soon burn the tissues by reason of sulphur and other fumes, constantly pouring into the atmosphere from molten seas of such elements on the side of Mercury continually facing the sun.

It is also certain that only in the twilight zone, around the rim of the planet, could life exist in any stable form.

Intelligence would be a low factor, development being slowed by the continual necessity to fight for existence against heavy odds. Civilization would not advance, nor would cities or science develop.



## FANTASTIC ADVENTURES

608 S. Dearborn,  
Chicago, Illinois.

In my opinion, the stories in the September issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES rank as follows:

No. Here

- .....Horror Out of Carthage  
.....Golden Girl of Kalendar  
.....The Amazing Invention of  
    Wilberforce Weems  
.....City Under the Sea  
.....The Man Who Saw Too Late  
.....The Insect Invasion

Enclosed is my letter of 20 words or more, giving my reason for selecting story number one for that position.

Check here.....

Name .....

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## « STORY CONTEST »

HERE are the winners in the July story contest! To Thornton Ayre, author of "The Golden Amazon" goes the first prize of \$75.00 for his excellent creation of a new science fiction character which has taken the hearts of our readers by storm, beating out even that marvelous master of science fiction, Edgar Rice Burroughs, who receives \$25.00 as the second prize for his "The Scientists Revolt." Congratulations, Mr. Ayre, and Mr. Burroughs, for turning out the two best stories in our July issue. The following tabulation is the complete results of the July vote. The percentage rating is based on the perfect score of a possible 2430 votes.

Title	Author	Votes	Rating
1. The Golden Amazon..	Thornton Ayre .....	1737	.71
2. The Scientists Revolt.	Edgar Rice Burroughs....	1674	.70
3. Invaders from Sirius..	Ed Earl Repp.....	1431	.59
	Frederic Arnold Kummer,		
4. Intrigue in Lemuria..	Jr. ....	1293	.54
5. She Walked Alone...	John Russell Fearn.....	1206	.50
6. The Monster from Nowhere .....	Nelson S. Bond.....	1071	.44

This month we again present the first prize of \$75.00 for the best story in this issue, and \$25.00 for the second best. In addition, we add \$10.00 as the prize to the reader whose votes come closest to the final tabulation, and who writes the best letter of 20 words or more on why he or she selected the leading story for that position. Come on, join the fun, win yourself a little extra money, and give the authors the incentive to turn out still better fantastic fiction for FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. Use the coupon at the left. Its removal will not delete any reading matter on the opposite page.

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**John Jacobs  
AFTER**



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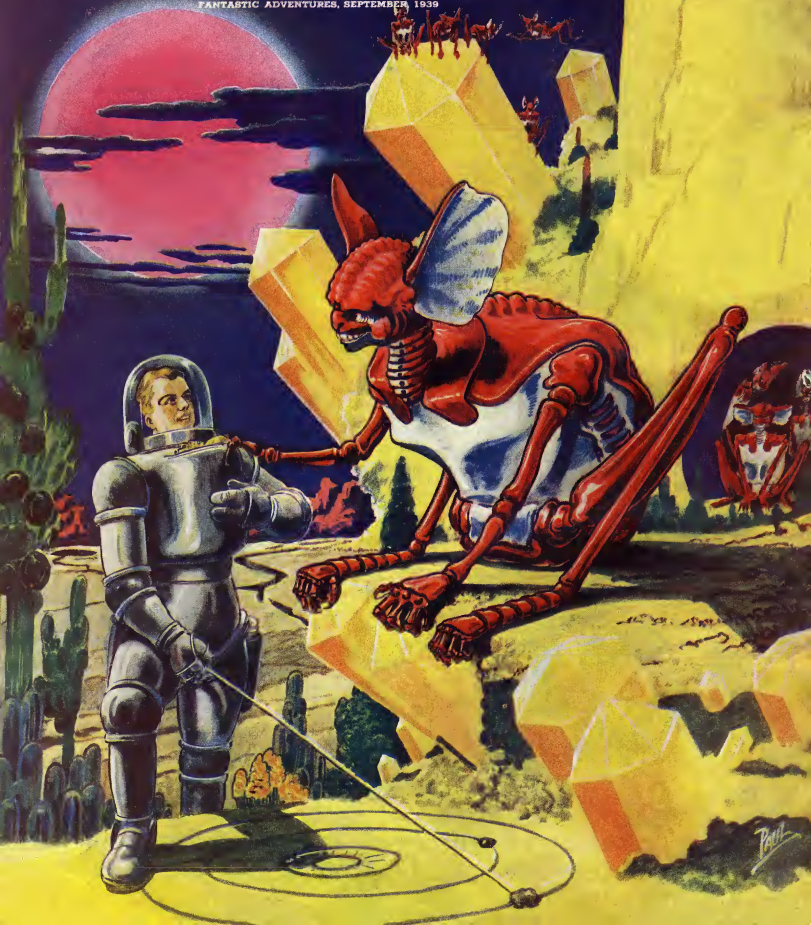
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# LIFE ON MERCURY

Mercury, being dangerously near the sun, is a planet of terrific heat. Life, says science, logically can exist only in insect form. For details see page 97

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, SEPTEMBER, 1939



Another Scan  
from

# Great Green Zifikus

